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REGINA POETARUM



Photo: W. A. Mansell and Co.

THE ANNUNCIATION! FRA LIPPO LIPPI

(In the National Gallery)

Frontispiece

REGINA POETARUM

OUR LADY'S ANTHOLOGY

SELECTED AND ARRANGED BY

THE HON. ALISON STOURTON

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TO
J. F.

PREFACE

THE poems are arranged in the order of the events of the Blessed Virgin's life, beginning with that earliest mystery made known to us by the Gospels, the Annunciation ; but a chronological list of the poets is prefixed to the series. Our Lady, the Queen of whom the poets sing, is herself a poet ; but her canticle of canticles has properly no place among these poems in her praise, for when she is exalted she but magnifies the Lord. Fifty poets, in as many and about half as many more of their sweetest utterances, give her here occasion to do so.

I heartily renew the expression of my gratitude to all who, by their permission to use copyright matter, have contributed towards the making of this Anthology—to authors or their representatives, and to publishers alike. These are all mentioned in their proper places ; but especial thanks are due to Mr. Albert Fleming ; to Miss Agnes Tobin, for her translation from Petrarch ; to Miss Gurney, for her brother's poem ; to Mrs. Manley Hopkins, for her son's ; and, most of all, to Mrs. Coventry Patmore,

PREFACE

for her husband's beautiful odes; and to Messrs. Burns and Oates for their generosity with regard to the 'May Carols' of Aubrey de Vere. To Mr. Orby Shipley, who has made this subject peculiarly his own, I beg to acknowledge several obligations; also to Father John Fitzpatrick, O.M.I., who by his study of 'The Germ' (the organ, in 1850, of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood), and of one of the Rawlinson MSS. in the Bodleian Library, made it possible to me to quote more largely from these two sources than has hitherto been done.

ALISON STOURTON.

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'THE world is governed by its ideals, and seldom or never has there been one which has exercised a more profound and, on the whole, a more salutary influence than the mediæval conception of the Virgin. For the first time woman was elevated to her rightful position, and the sanctity of weakness was recognized as well as the sanctity of sorrow. No longer the slave or toy of man, no longer associated only with ideas of degradation and of sensuality, woman rose, in the person of the Virgin Mother, into a new sphere, and became the object of a reverential homage of which antiquity had had no conception. Love was idealized. The moral charm and beauty of female excellence were fully felt. A new type of character was called into being: a new kind of admiration was fostered. Into a harsh and ignorant and benighted age this ideal type infused a conception of gentleness and of purity unknown to the proudest civilizations of the past. In the pages of living tenderness which many a monkish writer has left in honour of his celestial patron, in the millions who, in many lands and in many ages, have sought with no barren desire to mould their characters into her image, in those holy maidens who, for the love of Mary, have separated themselves from all the glories and pleasures of the world, to seek in fastings and vigils and humble charity to render themselves worthy of her benediction, in the new sense of honour, in the chivalrous respect, in the softening of manners, in the refinement of tastes displayed in all walks of society: in these and in many other ways we detect its influence. All that was best in Europe clustered around it, and it is the origin of many of the purest elements of our civilization.'— From Lecky's 'History of Rationalism in Europe' (Longmans).

GOD'S MOTHER

(LAURENCE HOUSMAN)

A GARDEN bower in bower
Grew waiting for God's hour :
Where no man ever trod,
This was the Gate of God.
The first bower was red—
Her lips which 'welcome' said.
The second bower was blue—
Her eyes that let God through.
The third bower was white—
Her soul in God's sight.
Three bowers of love
Won Christ from Heaven above.

From 'Spikenard' (Alex. Moring, Ltd.).

THE MATCHLESS MAID

(FIFTEENTH-CENTURY CAROL : ANONYMOUS)

I SING of a Maiden
That is makeless ;*
King of all kings
To her Son she ches.†

He came also ‡ still,
There His Mother was,
As dew in April
That falleth on the grass.

He came also still
To His Mother's bower,
As dew in April
That falleth on the flower.

He came also still,
There His Mother lay,
As dew in April
That falleth on the spray.

Mother and Maiden
Was never none but she ;
Well may such a Lady
God's Mother be.

* Matchless.

† Chose.

‡ As.

VAS SPIRITUALE

(FATHER GEOFFREY BLISS, S.J.)

'Twas noon, and Mary sat beside the well :
Thick all about the clustering lilies grew :
The sun from every taintless chalice drew
A fragrance sweet and heavy like a spell.
No bird sang : the breeze paused and fell :
In trance lay all the waiting world—and through
The breathing stillness heard, and trembled to
The awed low greeting of Prince Gabriel.

Hail ! full of grace : hail ! lily-bloom brimmed o'er
With dew the heavens rain down, the heavens breathe up :
O priceless vase, most holy loving-cup !
Of virgin gold with festal roses twined,
Whence God may drink and slake for evermore
His strange sweet thirst for love of human-kind.

From 'Mariale Novum' (Longmans).

THE ANNUNCIATION

(EMILY H. HICKEY)

HEAR ye the message, God's earth and the heavens of His
 might,
Borne by the Angel who stands in the infinite light ?
 Here on the brows of her, here on the breast of her,
 Strike her, God's glory, and smite.

How can such terrible worship and honour be laid,
Burden of awe and of anguish, of sorrow and shade,
 Weighty on brows of her, heavy on heart of her,
 Poor little Nazarene Maid ?

Nay, but the power of the Highest will shadow her o'er ;
Burning with God, unconsumed by the Flame evermore,
 Sharp be her anguish, and bitter her trouble, and
 Mighty her sorrow and sore,

God is the infinite Sea on whose waves undefied
Into the port of His will this Beloved shall ride,
 Hope for the nations and healing and joy for them
 Blessedly borne in her side.

From ' Our Lady of May ' (Catholic Truth Society).

FOR AN ANNUNCIATION

(DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI)

THE lilies stand before her like a screen
Through which, upon this warm and solemn day,
God surely hears. For there she kneels to pray
Who wafts our prayers to God—Mary the Queen.
She was Faith's present, parting what had been
From what began with her, and is for aye.
On either hand, God's twofold system lay :
With meek bowed face a Virgin prayed between.

So prays she, and the Dove flies in to her,
And she has turned. At the low porch is one
Who looks as though deep awe made him to smile.
Heavy with heat, the plants yield shadow there ;
The loud flies cross each other in the sun ;
And the aisled pillars meet the poplar-aisle.

From 'Poetical Works' (Ellis and Elvey).

AN OVERSHADOWING

(ALBERT FLEMING)

THE sky was all aglow,
And slowly and more slow
The passion-flower swayed above the window-sill ;
And as yet the night was young,
And the moon was scarcely slung,
But all the stars were shining and the land was very still.

In a corner of the room,
Like a star within the gloom,
The great white lily gleamed with a sudden threefold light ;
And it bowed its stately head
As she passed with silent tread,
And drew aside the curtain and looked into the night.

And never stars in skies
Had such depth as her twain eyes,
And all a summer's sunshine was tangled in her hair ;
All silent there she stood
In her peerless Maidenhood,
And the very stars grew brighter at seeing her so fair.

AN OVERSHADOWING

The passion-flower down slips
Until it sweeps her lips,
And opens all its petals as if to greet the light ;
And the lily's languorous scent
Floated round her as she leant,
As she leant from out the casement and looked into the
night.

Then she spake in accents clear :
' Yea, the time draws very near
When the watchers by Thine altars shall see a wondrous
thing ;
And a fire is in mine eyes,
And my heart leaps up and cries—
Thou art coming, O Messias ! Thou art coming, O my King !

' Yet the seasons wax and wane,
And I lift mine eyes in vain,
And I cannot hear Thy footsteps, my Adored !
Thou shalt search, but canst not find,
'Midst the daughters of mankind,
Any maiden meet to be the Mother of her Lord.'

Lo ! the east all ruddy glows
With an inmost heart of rose,
And the needles of the pines are black against the sky ;

AN OVERSHADOWING

And the high triumphant song
Rolls the starry fields along,
And beside the water-courses the aspens shake and sigh.

Yet with sweet and steadfast eyes
Did she watch the opening skies,
For she knew the hour was coming that should make her
life complete ;
And her heart kept murmuring,
'He is coming, O my King !
He is coming, the Messiah ; and I shall kiss His feet.'

And, behold ! about her head
Seven stars their glory shed ;
And the rush of mighty wings was in the air ;
And the broadening glory rolled
And enwrapped her fold on fold,
And her hands were clasped together, as she bent her head
in prayer.

Then on her spirit fell
Such a joy ineffable,
And all about her feet the waves of glory roll ;
And no mortal eye might see
How in awful mystery
The Spirit of the Godhead o'ershadowed all her soul.

AN OVERSHADOWING

Mother Anna from the stair
Called her child to evening prayer,
And the moonlight broadened slowly across the field and
wood ;
Heaven's light was on her face
As she meekly took her place—
And in her eyes was shining the light of Motherhood.

THE ANNUNCIATION

(I. D.—INIGO [PATRICK] DEANE ?)

Ave, Gratia Plena.

POISED on the well's mossed brink the unfilled ewer ;
And one dropped lily at her whiter feet
Unnoted. Does she listen ? What sound so sweet
Her soul from out the bosom's coverture
Into those raptured eyes could so allure ?
Or, with some vision, unfolded there where meet
Wan sands and sky-line, is her sense replete ?
Nay, but not these ; but lo ! God's time mature.
Lo ! the lit air, the sudden glory poured
And fragrance shed ; and, from the splendid space
Forth-issuing, as a passion-freighted chord
'Midst some vast minster's echoing arches waking,
A voice, in wave on wave of sweetness, breaking
Upon her spell-bound soul, ' Hail ! Full of Grace.'

Fiat Mihi.

What tremor of delight thrills earth and sky,
And wakes the nested birds, and turns the air
From violet to gold ? And, hark ! what rare
Sphere-music mingles with the numerous sigh

THE ANNUNCIATION

Of wind-swayed palms? And mark how crimsoned lie
The lone and glimmering sands. Ah! grown aware
Of God, the quickened earth is loth to fare
Into the joyless night. Thou shalt not die,
O! crown of all days risen. For ne'er since broke
The primal dawn, when stars of morning heard
God's voice and sang together, ne'er since woke
Its myriad life, has Nature so been stirred
To the great soul's deeps, as when this Maiden spoke,
And in her womb incarnate lay the Word.

Ecce Ancilla Domini.

Handmaiden!—but Queen crowned and throned above
God's kingdoms and all hearts—hence, nevermore
Shall one in dreams the hidden realms explore
Of absolute loveliness, and know not of
This perfect face now radiant with new love—
Thy rare face unrecorded—and before
Thy beauty shall not all his heart outpour,
Transfigured, e'en as now, beneath the Dove,
Beside thy ewer, beside the brimming well,
The bending palm o'erhead, and at thy feet,
In the well's imaged heaven, one tremulous star,
While, at thy heart, that song oracular
Gathers to fullness, and inviolable
Sweet Maidenhood and Motherhood first meet.

From 'The Catholic World.'

THE ANNUNCIATION

(BESSIE BENTLEY—MRS HÄHNEL)

'Tis but a maid with childlike face,
A maid of David's royal race,
Whom Gabriel greets, 'Hail, full of grace!'
'The Lord is with thee,' Maiden blest!
But in thy heart He fain would rest
And be thy babe, by thee caressed.

A look of reverent loving fear,
The glistening of a precious tear,
Then Mary says in accents clear:
'The handmaid of the Lord behold.'—
Ah, Maid! to thee God's Son was sold,
Bought by thy heart of purest gold.

From 'The Irish Monthly.'

MARY'S GIRLHOOD

FOR A PICTURE

(DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI)

THIS is that blessed Mary, pre-elect
God's Virgin. Gone is a great while, and she
Dwelt young in Nazareth of Galilee.
Unto God's will she brought devout respect,
Profound humility of intellect,
And supreme patience. From her mother's knee
Faithful and hopeful ; wise in charity ;
Strong in grave peace ; in pity circumspect.

So held she through her girlhood ; as it were
An angel-watered lily, that near God
Grows and is quiet. Till, one dawn at home
She woke in her white bed, and had no fear
At all,—yet wept till sunshine, and felt awed :
Because the fullness of the time was come.

From ' Poetical Works ' (Ellis and Elvey).

THE VIRGIN

(WORDSWORTH)

MOTHER ! whose virgin bosom was uncrost
With the least shade of thought to sin allied ;
Woman above all women glorified,
Our tainted nature's solitary boast ;
Purer than foam on central ocean tost ;
Brighter than eastern skies at daybreak strewn
With fancied roses, than the unblemished moon
Before her wane begins on heaven's blue coast ;
Thy Image falls to earth. Yet some, I ween,
Not unforgiven the suppliant knee might bend,
As to a visible Power, in which did blend
All that was mixed and reconciled in thee
Of mother's love with maiden purity,
Of high with low, celestial with terrene !

THE CHILD'S PURCHASE

A PROLOGUE

(COVENTRY PATMORE)

As a young Child, whose Mother, for a jest,
To his own use a golden coin flings down,
Devises blythe how he may spend it best,
Or on a horse, a bride-cake, or a crown,
Till, wearied with his quest,
Nor liking altogether that nor this,
He gives it back for nothing but a kiss,
Endow'd so I
With golden speech, my choice of toys to buy,
And scanning power and pleasure and renown,
Till each in turn, with looking at, looks vain,
For her mouth's bliss,
To her who gave it give I it again.

Ah, Lady elect,
Whom the Time's scorn has saved from its respect,
Would I had art
For uttering this which sings within my heart !

THE CHILD'S PURCHASE

But, lo,
Thee to admire is all the art I know.
My Mother and God's; Fountain of miracle!
Give me thereby some praise of thee to tell
In such a Song
As may my Guide severe and glad not wrong
Who never spake till thou'dst on him conferr'd
The right, convincing word!
Grant me the steady heat
Of thought wise, splendid, sweet,
Urged by the great, rejoicing wind that rings
With draught of unseen wings,
Making each phrase, for love and for delight,
Twinkle like Sirius on a frosty night!
Aid thou thine own dear fame, thou only Fair,
At whose petition meek
The Heavens themselves decree that, as it were,
They will be weak!

Thou Speaker of all wisdom in a Word,
Thy Lord!
Speaker who thus couldst well afford
Thence to be silent;—ah, what silence that
Which had for prologue thy 'Magnificat'?—
O, Silence full of wonders
More than by Moses in the Mount were heard,
More than were utter'd by the Seven Thunders;
Silence that crowns, unnoted, like the voiceless blue,

THE CHILD'S PURCHASE

The loud world's varying view,
And in its holy heart the sense of all things ponders !
That acceptably I may speak of thee,
Ora pro me !

Keynote and stop
Of the thunder-going chorus of sky-Powers ;
Essential drop
Distill'd from worlds of sweetest-savour'd flowers
To anoint with nuptial praise
The Head which for thy Beauty doff'd its rays,
And thee, in His exceeding glad descending, meant,
And Man's new days
Made of His deed the adorning accident !
Vast Nothingness of Self, fair female Twin
Of Fullness, sucking all God's glory in !
(Ah, Mistress mine,
To nothing I have added only sin,
And yet would shine !)
Ora pro me !

Life's cradle and death's tomb !
To lie within whose womb,
There, with divine self-will infatuate,
Love-captive to the thing He did create,
Thy God did not abhor,
No more
Than Man, in Youth's high spousal-tide.
Abhors at last to touch

THE CHILD'S PURCHASE

The strange lips of his long-procrastinating Bride ;
Nay, not the least imagined part as much !

Ora pro me !

My Lady, yea, the Lady of my Lord,
Who didst the first descry
The burning secret of virginity,
We know with what reward !
Prism whereby
Alone we see
Heav'n's light in its triplicity ;
Rainbow complex
In bright distinction of all beams of sex,
Shining for aye
In the simultaneous sky,
To One, thy Husband, Father, Son, and Brother,
Spouse blissful, Daughter, Sister, milk-sweet Mother ;
Ora pro me !

Mildness, whom God obeys, obeying thyself
Him in thy joyful Saint, nigh lost to sight
In the great gulf
Of his own glory and thy neighbour light ;
With whom thou wast as else with husband none
For perfect fruit of inmost amity ;
Who felt for thee
Such rapture of refusal that no kiss
Ever seal'd wedlock so conjoint with bliss ;
And whose good singular eternally

THE CHILD'S PURCHASE

'Tis now, with nameless peace and vehemence,
To enjoy thy married smile,
That mystery of innocence ;
Ora pro me !

Sweet Girlhood without guile,
The extreme of God's creative energy ;
Sunshiny Peak of human personality ;
The world's sad aspirations' one Success ;
Bright Blush, that sav'st our shame from shamelessness ;
Chief Stone of stumbling ; Sign built in the way
To set the foolish every where a-bray ;
Hem of God's robe, which all who touch are healed ;
To which the outside many honour yield
With a reward and grace
Unguess'd by the unwash'd boor that hails Him to His
face,
Spurning the safe, ingratiant courtesy
Of suing Him by thee ;
Ora pro me !

Creature of God rather the sole than first ;
Knot of the cord
Which binds together all and all unto their Lord :
Suppliant Omnipotence ; best to the worst ;
Our only Saviour from an abstract Christ
And Egypt's brick-kilns, where the lost crowd plods,
Blaspheming its false Gods ;
Peace-beaming Star, by which shall come enticed,

THE CHILD'S PURCHASE

Though nought thereof as yet they weet,
Unto thy Babe's small feet,
The Mighty, wand'ring disemparadised,
Like Lucifer, because to thee
They will not bend the knee ;
Ora pro me !

Desire of Him whom all things else desire !
Bush aye with Him as He with thee on fire !
Neither in his great Deed nor on His throne—
Oh, folly of Love, the intense
Last culmination of Intelligence,—
Him seem'd it good that God should be alone !
Basking in unborn laughter of thy lips,
Ere the world was, with absolute delight
His Infinite reposed in thy Finite ;
Well-match'd : He, universal being's Spring,
And thou, in whom are gather'd up the ends of every-
thing !
Ora pro me !

In season due, on His sweet-fearful bed,
Rock'd by an earthquake, curtain'd with eclipse,
Thou shar'd'st the rapture of the sharp spear's head,
And thy bliss pale
Wrought for our boon what Eve's did for our bale ;
Thereafter, holding a little thy soft breath,
Thou underwent'st the ceremony of death ;
And, now, Queen-Wife,

THE CHILD'S PURCHASE

Sitt'st at the right hand of the Lord of Life,
Who, of all bounty, craves for only fee
The glory of hearing it besought with smiles by thee !
Ora pro me !

Mother, who lead'st me still by unknown ways,
Giving the gifts I know not how to ask,
Bless thou the work
Which, done, redeems my many wasted days,
Makes white the murk,
And crowns the few which thou wilt not dispraise,
When clear my Songs of Lady's graces rang,
And little guess'd I 'twas of thee I sang !

Vainly, till now my pray'rs would thee compel
To fire my verse with thy shy fame, too long
Shunning world-blazon of well-ponder'd song ;
But doubtful smiles, at last, 'mid thy denials lurk ;
From which I spell,
' Humility and greatness grace the task
Which he who does it deems impossible !'

From 'The Unknown Eros' (Bell and Sons).

AISHAH SCHÉCHINAH

(ROBERT STEPHEN HAWKER)

A SHAPE, like folded light, embodied air,
Yet wreathed with flesh, and warm ;
All that of Heaven is feminine and fair,
Moulded in visible form.

She stood, the Lady Schéchinah of earth,
A chancel for the sky ;
Where woke, to breath and beauty, God's own birth,
For men to see Him by.

Round her, too pure to mingle with the day,
Light, that was Life, abode ;
Folded within her fibres meekly lay .
The link of boundless God.

So linked, so blent, that when, with pulse fulfilled,
Moved but that infant Hand,
Far, far away, His conscious Godhead thrilled,
And stars might understand.

AISHAH SCHÉCHINAH

Lo ! where they pause, with inter-gathering rest,
The Threefold and the One !
And lo ! He binds them to her Orient breast,
His Manhood girded on.

The Zone, where two glad worlds for ever meet,
Beneath that bosom ran :
Deep in that womb, the conquering Paraclete
Smote Godhead on to man !

Sole scene among the stars, where, yearning, glide
The Threefold and the One :
Her God upon her lap, the Virgin-Bride,
Her awful Child, her Son.

From ' Cornish Ballads, etc.' (Lane).

TO OUR BLESSED LORD

(REV. GEORGE RATCLIFFE WOODWARD)

EVERY creature, by Thee made,
On Thy birthday homage paid :—
Angels lent Thee hymn of praise,
Heaven the star with silver rays,
Wise Men incense, myrrh and gold,
Shepherds wonder manifold,
Beasts the manger, earth the cave,—
We the Virgin-Mother gave.

From the Greek.

TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN: SEQUENCE

(FATHER JOHN GRAY)

GATE of crystal, salutation !
Foundry of the living ration,
Medicine of desolation,
 Mary, flower of earth.
Thornless blossom of salvation ;
Branch, by heavenly inspiration,
Whence the almond's aspiration
 Breaks a way to birth.

Salutation, virtuous maiden !
Blessed womb with glory laden
 Fallen from above.
Thy entreaty, Queen, shall win us
Grace of God igniting in us
 Double flames of love.

Wonderful, a thing unknown ;
 Lo, a maid conceiving ;
God is clothed in flesh and bone ;
 Marvel past believing.

TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

Son of heaven and star of earth
 Wedding one another ;
Lo, a novel bed of birth,
 Lo, a damsel mother.

As the prophet Moses lay
 In his osier basket,
Godhead lurked in human clay,
 In this virgin casket.

Open ear and brain alert
 At the Godhead's message :
Traces melt and leave no hurt
 Of the Godhead's passage.

Though a thousand sun-rays pass
 Through a fastened casement,
Nothing ill befalls the glass,
 Wreckage or abasement ;

Thus, and subtler than the sun,
 (Pure the earthly house)
God, the Father's only Son,
 Passes through the spouse.

Thoughts flow outward, from within
 Chambers of the heart ;
Strange conception without sin
 Ripens without smart.

TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

Eyes accessible to ours,
Keep the light which dowered ;
Gay the garden bore its flowers,
Mother undeflowered.

Whiter than the lily is,
Like the rose prolific,
Ask thy Son's indulgencies,
Virgin beatific.

Shield us from a dread award
At His judgment seat ;
Be we with thyself restored,
Fed with angels' meat.

From ' Spiritual Poems ' (A Translation).

TURRIS EBURNEA

(AUBREY DE VERE)

THIS scheme of worlds, which vast we call,
Is only vast compared with man :
Compared with God, the One yet All,
Its greatness dwindles to a span.

A Lily with its isles of buds
Asleep on some unmeasured sea :—
O God, the starry multitudes,
What are they more than this to Thee ?

Yet, girt by Nature's petty pale,
Each tenant holds the place assigned
To each in Being's awful scale :
The last of creatures leaves behind

The abyss of Nothingness : the first
Into the abyss of Godhead peers,
Waiting that Vision which shall burst
In glory on the eternal years.

TURRIS EBURNEA

Tower of our Hope ! through thee we climb
Finite creation's topmost stair ;
Through thee from Sion's height sublime
Towards God we gaze through clearer air.

Infinite distance still divides
Created from Creative Power ;
But all which intercepts and hides
Lies dwarfed by that surpassing Tower !
From ' May Carols ' (Burns and Oates).

*THE HYMN,
'O GLORIOSA DOMINA'*

(RICHARD CRASHAW)

HAIL, most high, most humble one !
Above the world, below thy Son,
Whose blush the moon beauteously mars
And stains the timorous light of stars.
He that made all things had not done
Till He had made Himself thy Son.
The whole world's Host would be thy guest,
And board Himself at thy rich breast.
O boundless hospitality,
The Feast of all things feeds on thee !

 The first Eve, mother of our fall,
Ere she bore anyone slew all.
Of her unkind gift might we have
The inheritance of a hasty grave ;
Quick buried in the wanton tomb
 Of one forbidden bit,
Had not a Better Fruit forbidden it ;

‘O GLORIOSA DOMINA’

Had not thy healthful womb
The world's new Eastern window been,
And given us Heav'n again in giving Him,
Thine was the rosy dawn that sprung the day
Which renders all the stars she stole away.

Let then the aged world be wise, and all
Prove nobly, here, unnatural :
'Tis gratitude to forget that other,
And call the Maiden Eve their Mother.

Ye redeemed nations far and near,
Applaud your happy selves in her,
(All you to whom this love belongs)
And keep 't alive with lasting songs.

Let hearts and lips speak loud and say,
Hail, Door of Life, and Source of Day !
The door was shut, the fountain sealed,
Yet light was seen and life revealed ;
The fountain sealed, yet life found way.

Glory to Thee, great Virgin's Son,
In bosom of Thy Father's bliss !
The same to Thee, sweet Spirit, be done,
As ever shall be, was, and is !

ON THE BLESSED VIRGIN'S BASHFULNESS

(RICHARD CRASHAW)

THAT on her lap she casts her humble eye,
'Tis the sweet pride of her humility.
The fair star is well fixt, for where, O where
Could she have fixt it on a fairer sphere?
'Tis Heaven, 'tis Heaven she sees, Heaven's God there
 lies ;
She can see Heaven, and ne'er lift up her eyes :
This new Guest to her eyes new laws hath given,
'Twas once, Look up, 'tis now, Look down, to Heaven.

THE 'STABAT MATER' OF THE CRIB

(GIACOMO DI BENEDETTI—B. JACOPONE DA TODI)

FULL of joy the beauteous Mother
Stood beside our new-born Brother,
 Who was cradled in the hay ;
And her spirit's exultation
Thrilled her frame with sweet elation,
 To behold Him where He lay.

Oh ! what deep, ecstatic feeling,
O'er the stainless Mother stealing,
 Marked her Sole-Begotten's birth :
How her soul's own silent laughter
Filled her gaze the moment after
 She first saw His face on earth !

Whose the eyes that would not measure,
Wonder-wide, that Mother's pleasure,
 Like to which no bliss hath been !
His in sooth were utmost rapture
Who one sight of her could capture
 At her mother-play serene.

THE 'STABAT MATER' OF THE CRIB

Christ she saw, in wintry weather,
Housed with ox and ass together,
For the trespass of her race,
And how creatures bent before Him—
Wailful Sweeting!—to adore Him,
In the hostel's lowliest place.

Citizens of Heaven were winging
Round the crib, all sweetly singing
Their immeasurable joy ;
Where an old man with the Maiden
Speechless stood, their hearts o'erladen,
Wondering o'er her wondrous Boy.

Fount of love, my Mother Mary !
Yield me love, nor let me vary
In this love that flows from thee :
Let me love my God and Saviour
So, that with my heart's behaviour
Even His well pleased may be.

Holy Mother ! hearken to me :
Let His wounds, gone through and through me,
Rest engraven on my heart ;
Yea, the pain that in the manger
Lay, for earth's celestial Stranger,
Be, like thine, my pain in part.

THE 'STABAT MATER' OF THE CRIB

Make my joys be joys more truly
To thy little Jesus duly
 Clinging until life be passed ;
Give me of thy Babe fruition,
And mine exile's first ambition
 Be, like thine, to hold Him fast :
Spread throughout the world this longing
And, when hearts to Him are thronging
 Let mine be at least the last.

Peerless Queen of Virgins! take me
Into grace, and make, yes! make me
 Clasp thy Baby to my breast :
Let me bear thy beauteous Burden,
Born, that life's immortal guerdon,
 Dying, He from death should wrest.

Let my heart with Him be sated,
Nay, like thine, inebriated,
 Dancing in its boundless bliss :
Overcome are all my senses
With a wonder that immense is,
 At communion such as this.

All who love this lowly stable
With the shepherds will be able
 To keep watch the livelong night :

THE 'STABAT MATER' OF THE CRIB

Pray that, by thine Offspring's merit,
These, His chosen, may inherit
 Their true country's morning light.

Keep me, 'neath thine own protection,
For thy Son, from all defection
 Guarded by His Word and grace ;
When my dust to dust returneth,
That for which my spirit yearneth
 Grant me too—to see His Face.

From the Latin : Anonymous.

OUR BLESSED LADY'S LULLABY

(RICHARD ROWLANDS, *ALIAS* VERSTEGEN)

UPON my lap my Sovereign sits,
And sucks upon my breast ;
Meanwhile His love sustains my life.
And gives my body rest.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy.
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy !

When Thou hast taken Thy repast,
Repose, my Babe, on me ;
So may Thy Mother and Thy nurse
Thy cradle also be.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy !

I grieve that duty doth not work
All that my wishing would,
Because I would not be to Thee
But in the best I should.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy !

OUR BLESSED LADY'S LULLABY

Yet as I am, and as I may,
I must and will be Thine,
Though all too little for Thyself
Vouchsafing to be mine.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy!

My wits, my words, my deeds, my thoughts,
And else what is in me,
I rather will not wish to us
If not in serving Thee.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy!

My Babe, my Bliss, my Child, my Choice
My Fruit, my Flower and Bud;
My Jesus, and my only Joy,
The Sum of all my good.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy!

My Sweetness, and the Sweetest most
That Heaven could Earth deliver;
Soul of my love, Spirit of my life,
Abide with me for ever.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy

OUR BLESSED LADY'S LULLABY

Live still with me, and be my Love,
And Death will me refrain ;
Unless Thou let me die with Thee,
To live with Thee again.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy !

Leave now to wail, thou luckless wight,
That wrought'st thy race's woe ;
Redress is found, and foiled is
Thy fruit-alluring foe.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy !

Thy fruit of Death from Paradise
Made Thee exilèd mourn ;
My fruit of Life to Paradise
Makes joyful Thy return.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy !

Grow up, good Fruit, be nourisht by
These fountains two of me,
That only flow with maiden's-milk,
The only meat for Thee.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy !

OUR BLESSED LADY'S LULLABY

The Earth is now a Heaven become,
And this base bower of mine
A princely palace unto me
My Son doth make to shine.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy.

His sight gives clearness to my sight,
When waking I Him see ;
And sleeping, His mild countenance
Gives favour unto me.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy!

When I Him in my arms embrace,
I feel my heart embraced,
Ev'n by the inward grace of His,
Which He in me hath placed.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy.

And when I kiss His loving lips,
Then His sweet-smelling breath
Doth yield a favour to my soul,
That feeds Love, Hope, and Faith.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy!

OUR BLESSED LADY'S LULLABY

The shepherds left their keeping sheep,
For joy to see my Lamb ;
How may I more rejoice to see
Myself to be the Dam.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy !

Three kings their treasures hither brought
Of incense, myrrh, and gold,
The Heaven's Treasure and the King
That here they might behold.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy !

One sort an Angel did direct ;
A star did guide the other ;
And all the fairest Son to see
That ever had a mother.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy !

This sight I see, this Child I have,
This Infant I embrace,
O endless Comfort of the earth,
And Heaven's eternal Grace.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy !

OUR BLESSED LADY'S LULLABY

Thee Sanctity herself doth serve ;
Thee Goodness doth attend ;
Thee Blessedness doth wait upon,
And Virtues all commend.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy !

Great kings and prophets wishèd have
To see that I possess ;
Yet wish I never Thee to see,
If not in thankfulness.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy !

Let Heaven, and Earth, and Saints, and men,
Assistance give to me,
That all their most occurring aid
Augment my thanks to Thee.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy !

And let th' ensuing blessèd race
Thou wilt succeeding raise,
Join all their praises unto mine
To multiply Thy praise.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy !

OUR BLESSED LADY'S LULLABY

And take my service well in worth,
And Joseph's here with me,
Who of my husband bears the name,
Thy servant for to be.
Sing lullaby, my little Boy,
Sing lullaby, my life's Joy!

THE BLADE OF GRASS

(DORA GREENWELL)

‘A sword shall pierce through thine own soul.’—ST LUKE ii. 35.

O LITTLE blade of grass,
A little sword thou art,
That, in thy haste to pass,
Hast pierced thy Mother's heart.

O little blade of grass,
A little tongue thou art
Of cleaving flame—alas!
Thou hast cleft thy Mother's heart.

O little blade, upcurled
Leaf, sword, or fiery dart,
To win thy Father's world,
Thou must break thy Mother's heart.

From 'Camera Obscura.'

THE VIRGIN AT THE CRIB

(ALPHONSE DAUDET)

SWATHED in new swaddling-bands and white,
The Virgin rocked her Babe one night :
He chirruped like a linnet's brood ;
She rocked, and sang such songs as keep,
Or make, our little angels good ;
But Jesus did not go to sleep.

In gleeful wonder, on His bed,
He laughs and sings at what is said,
Like acolyte or chorister ;
His arms beat time ; but Mary's eyes
Betray the grief it is to her
To see how wakeful Jesus lies.

' Sweet Jesus,' says that trembling dam,
His Mother, ' snow-white Lamb, my Lamb,
Sleep : it is late ; the lamp is out ;
Your brow is red, your limbs are tired ;
Sleep, Love, and sleep one fear without.'
But Jesus still no sleep desired.

THE VIRGIN AT THE CRIB

'Tis cold ; there's wind ; no fire have we ;
Sleep ; it is night, God's night, you see—
Love's own white spousal-tide secure.
Quick ! hide those eyes beneath the clothes,
Which jealous stars would not endure.'
But Jesus did not even doze.

' If you would sleep some little space,
Like ring-doves dreams would come apace,
And nests upon your eyelids build ;
They'll come ; sleep, Sweetheart.'—Welladay !
Songs idle were, prayers unfulfilled ;
From Jesus sleep was far away.

Then o'er her Child did Mary bow
Her wistful eyes and anxious brow :
' You lie awake, my Dearest ; so
You make me—me, your Mother, weep.'
But when He saw her tears o'erflow,
The little Jesus fell asleep.

From the French : Anonymous.

ON A FEAST OF OUR LADY

(KATHARINE TYNAN HINKSON)

THE Lady of Good Counsel, she
Leaneth her ear untiringly :
 Sweet is the counsel of her mouth,
 Sweeter than odours of the South
In some untravelled, purple sea.

About her knees she gathereth
Her folk perplex with life and death,
 Stancheth the tears that flow like rain,
 Maketh the light and darkness plain,
Bloweth off trouble with her breath.

In every one her Son she sees,
Therefore the world her baby is,
 That, like a hurt and frightened child,
 Sobs on her breast, the Undefined,
Or hides its face upon her knees.

ON A FEAST OF OUR LADY

And none shall fear to hear her say :
‘ You would not hear another day,
 But went your way, and so are sad.’
 Seeing you come, she will be glad—
That is our sweet-heart Lady’s way.

Harbinger of the Daystar’s rise,
Star of our rainy April skies,
 Shine through the mists and light our way,
 And chiefly those whose footsteps stray
Far from thy counsel and thine eyes.

From ‘ The Ave Maria.’

THE KNOT

(HENRY VAUGHAN)

BRIGHT Queen of Heaven, God's Virgin Spouse,
The glad world's blessed Maid !
Whose beauty tied life to thy house,
And brought us saving aid.

Thou art the true Love's-knot ; by thee
God is made our ally ;
And man's inferior essence He
With His did dignify.

For coalescent by that band
We are His body grown,
Nourished with favours from His hand
Whom for our Head we own.

And such a knot, what arm dares loose,
What life, what death can sever ?
Which us in Him, and Him in us,
United keeps for ever.

GAUDIUM ANGELORUM

(AUBREY DE VERE)

‘ HE looked on her humility ’—

Ah ! humbler thrice that breast was made
When Jesus watched His Mother’s eye,
When God each God-born wish obeyed !

In her with seraph seraph strove,
And each the other’s purpose crost :
And now ’twas Reverence, now ’twas Love,
The peaceful strife that won or lost.

Now to that Infant she extends
Those hands that mutely say ‘ Mine own !’
Now shrinks abashed, or swerves and bends
As bends a willow backward blown.

And oft-times, like a rose-leaf caught
By eddying airs from fairy-land,
The kiss a sleeping brow that sought
Descends upon the unsceptred hand !

GAUDIUM ANGELORUM

O tenderest awe whose sweet excess
Had ended in a fond despair,
Had not the all-pitying helplessness
Constrained the boldness of her care !

O holiest strife ! The angelic hosts
That watched it hid their dazzled eyes,
And lingered from the heavenly coasts
To bless that heavenlier Paradise !

From ' May Carols ' (Burns and Oates).

THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS

(ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING)

SLEEP, sleep, mine Holy One,
My flesh, my Lord!—what name? I do not know
A name that seemeth not too high or low,

Too far from me or Heaven.
My Jesus, *that* is best! that word being given
By the majestic angel whose command
Was softly as a man's beseeching said,
When I and all the earth appeared to stand

In the great overflow
Of light celestial from his wings and head.

Sleep, sleep, my saving One!

And art Thou come for saving, baby-browed
And speechless Being—art Thou come for saving?
The palm that grows beside our door is bowed
By treadings of the low wind from the south,
A restless shadow through the chamber waving :
Upon its bough a bird sings in the sun ;
But Thou, with that close slumber on Thy mouth,
Dost seem of wind and sun already weary.
Art come for saving, O my weary One ?

THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS

Perchance this sleep that shutteth out the dreary
Earth-sounds and motions opens on Thy soul
High dreams on fire with God ;
High songs that make the pathways where they roll
More bright than stars do theirs ; and visions new
Of Thine eternal Nature's old abode.

Suffer this mother's-kiss,
Best thing that earthly is,
To glide the music and the glory through,
Nor narrow in Thy dream the broad upliftings
Of any seraph wing !
Thus noiseless, thus. Sleep, sleep, my dreaming One !

The slumber of His lips meseems to run
Through *my* lips to mine heart ; to all its shiftings
Of sensual life, bringing contrariousness
In a great calm. I feel, I could lie down
As Moses did, and die,*—and then live most.
I am 'ware of you, heavenly Presences,
That stand with your peculiar light unlost,—
Each forehead with a high thought for a crown,
Unsunned i' the sunshine. I am 'ware. Ye throw
No shade against the wall. How motionless
Ye round me with your living statuary,
While, through your whiteness, in and outwardly,

* It is a Jewish tradition that Moses died of the kisses of God's lips.

THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS

Continual thoughts of God appear to go,
Like light's soul in itself. I bear, I bear,
To look upon the dropt lids of your eyes,
Though their external shining testifies
To that beatitude, within which were
Enough to blast an eagle at his sun.
I fall not on my sad clay face before ye—

I look on His ; I know
My spirit, which dilateth with the woe
Of His mortality,
May well contain your glory.
Yea, drop your lids more low—
Ye are but fellow-worshippers with me.
Sleep, sleep, my worshipped One !

We sate among the stalls at Bethlehem :
The dumb kine from the fodder turning them,
Softened their hornèd faces
To almost human gazes
Toward the newly Born ;
The simple shepherds from the star-lit brooks
Brought visionary looks,
As yet in their astonied hearing rung
The strange, sweet angel-tongue ;
The Magi of the East, in sandals worn,
Knelt reverent, sweeping round,
With long pale beards, their gifts upon the ground—

THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS

The incense, myrrh and gold
These baby hands were impotent to hold.
So, let all earthlies and celestials wait
Upon Thy royal state !
Sleep, sleep, my kingly One !

I am not proud—meek Angels, ye invest
New meeknesses to hear such utterance rest
On mortal lips—‘ I am not proud ’—*not proud !*
Albeit in my flesh God sent His Son,
Albeit over Him my head is bowed,
As others bow before Him, still mine heart
Bows lower than their knees. . . .

I often wandered forth, more child than maiden,
Among the midnight hills of Galilee,
Whose summits looked heaven-laden,
Listening to silence, as it seemed to be
God’s voice, so soft yet strong, so fain to press
Upon my heart, as Heaven did on the height,
And waken up its shadows by a light,
And show its vileness by a holiness.
Then I knelt down most silent like the night,
Too self-renounced for fears,
Raising my small face to the boundless blue,
Whose stars did mix and tremble in my tears :
God heard them falling after, with His dew. . . .

THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS

Ah, King ! ah, Christ ! ah, Son !
The kine, the Shepherds, the abasèd Wise,
Did all less lowly wait
Than I upon Thy state—
Sleep, sleep, my kingly One !

Art Thou a King, then ? Come, His universe,
Come, crown me Him a King !
Pluck rays from all such stars as never fling
Their light where fell a curse,
And make a crowning for this kingly brow !—
What is my word ?—Each empyrèal star
Sits in a sphere afar
In shining ambuscade :
The child-brow, crowned by none,
Keeps its unchildlike shade.
Sleep, sleep, my crownless One

Unchildlike shade !—no other babe doth wear
An aspect very sorrowful, as Thou.—
No small babe-smiles my watching heart has seen
To float like speech the speechless lips between ;
No dovelike cooing in the golden air ;
No quick, short joys of leaping babyhood.
Alas ! our earthly good,
In Heaven thought evil, seems too good for Thee :
Yet, sleep, my weary One !

THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS

And then, the drear sharp tongue of prophecy,
With the dread sense of things which shall be done,
Doth smite me inly, like a sword—a sword?—
(*That 'smites the Shepherd.'*) Then, I think aloud
The words, 'despised'—'rejected'—every word
Recoiling into darkness, as I view

The Darling on my knee.
Bright Angels, move not—lest ye stir the cloud
Betwixt my soul and His futurity.
I must not die, with mother's-work to do,
And could not live—and see.

It is enough to bear
This Image still and fair ;
This Holier in sleep
Than a saint at prayer ;
This aspect of a Child
Who never sinned or smiled ;
This Presence, in an Infant's face ;
This sadness most like love,
This love than love more deep,
This weakness, like omnipotence,
It is so strong to move.
Awful is this watching-place ;
Awful, what I see from hence—
A King, without regalia,
A God, without the thunder,

THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS

A Child, without the heart for play ;
Ay, a Creator rent asunder
From His first glory, and cast away
On His own world, for me alone
To hold in hands created, crying, ' Son !'

That tear fell not on Thee,
Belovèd, yet Thou stirrest in Thy slumber.
Thou, stirring not for glad sounds out of number
Which through the vibratory palm-trees run
From summer wind and bird,
So quickly hast Thou heard
A tear fall silently ?—
Wak'st Thou, O loving One ?

MATER DEI

(KATHARINE TYNAN HINKSON)

SHE looked to East, she looked to West ;
Her eyes unfathomable, mild,
That saw both worlds, came home to rest,—
Home to her own sweet Child.
God's golden head was at her breast.

What need to look o'er land and sea ?
What could the winged ships bring to her ?
What gold or gems of price might be,
Ivory or miniver,
Since God Himself lay on her knee ?

What could th' intense blue heaven keep
To draw her eyes and thoughts so high ?
All Heaven was where her Boy did leap,
Where her foot quietly
Went rocking the dear God asleep.

The Angel-folk fared up and down,
A Jacob's Ladder hung between
Her quiet chamber and God's Town.
She saw unawed, serene ;
Her God himself played by her gown.

From 'Poems' (Lawrence and Bullen).

TO OUR BLESSED LADY

(HENRY CONSTABLE)

I

IN that, O Queen of Queens! thy birth was free
From guilt, which others do of grace bereave,
When, in their mother's womb, they life receive,
God, as His sole-borne Daughter, lovèd thee.
To match thee, like thy birth's nobility,
He thee His Spirit for thy Spouse did leave,
Of whom thou didst His only Son conceive,
And so wast linked to all the Trinity.

Cease, then, O Queens! who earthly crowns do wear
To glory in the pomp of worldly things;
If men such high respect unto you bear,
Which daughters, wives, and mothers are of kings,
What honour should unto that Queen be done,
Who had your God for Father, Spouse, and Son!

II

SOVEREIGN of Queens! if vain ambition move
My heart to seek an earthly prince's grace,
Show me thy Son in His imperial place,
Whose servants reign our kings and queens above;

TO OUR BLESSED LADY

And if alluring passions I do prove
By pleasing sighs, show me thy lovely face,
Whose beams the angels' beauty do deface,
And even inflame the seraphims with love.

So by ambition I shall humble be
When, in the presence of the highest King,
I serve all His, that He may honour me.
And love my heart to chaste desires shall bring,
When fairest Queen looks on me from her throne,
And, jealous, bids me love but her alone.

III

WHY should I any love, O Queen! but thee?
If favour past a thankful love should breed,
Thy womb did bear, thy breast my Saviour feed;
And thou didst never cease to succour me.
If love do follow worth and dignity,
Thou all in thy perfections dost exceed;
If love be led by hope of future meed,
What pleasure more than thee in Heaven to see?

An earthly sight doth only please the eye,
And breeds desire, but doth not satisfy:
Thy sight gives us possession of all joy,
And with such full delights each sense shall fill,
As heart shall wish but for to see thee still,
And, ever seeing, ever shall enjoy.

TO OUR BLESSED LADY

IV

SWEET Queen! although thy beauty raise up me
From sight of baser beauties here below,
Yet let me not rest there, but higher go
To Him, who took His shape from God and thee.
And if thy form in Him more fair I see,
What pleasure from His Deity shall flow,
By whose fair beams His beauty shineth so,
When I shall it behold eternally.

Then shall my love of pleasure have his fill,
When beauty's self, in whom all pleasure is,
Shall my enamoured soul embrace and kiss,
And shall new loves and new delights distil,
Which from my soul shall gush into my heart,
And through my body flow to every part.

REGINA COELI

(COVENTRY PATMORE)

SAY, did his sisters wonder what could Joseph see
In a mild, silent little maid like thee?
And was it awful, in that narrow house,
With God for Babe and Spouse?
Nay, like thy simple, female sort, each one
Apt to find Him in Husband and in Son,
Nothing to thee came strange in this.
Thy wonder was but wondrous bliss:
Wondrous, for, though
True Virgin lives not but does know,
(Howbeit none ever yet confess'd),
That God lies really in her breast,
Of thine He made His special nest!
And so
All mothers worship little feet,
And kiss the very ground they've trod;
But, ah, thy little Baby sweet
Who was indeed thy God!

From 'Amelia, etc.' (Bell and Sons).

THEOTOKION

(REV. GEORGE RATCLIFFE WOODWARD)

LADY Mary, Blissful Dame,
What shall be thy proper name ?
Heaven ? Forasmuch as He,
Sun of Justice, dawned in thee.
Paradise ? Because thy bower
Grew the everlasting Flower.
Maid ? Because, withouten stain,
Virgin aye thou dost remain.
Is it *Mother Undeiled ?*
Seeing that the Holy Child,
Whom thy spotless arms did bear,
God and Lord is everywhere.
Him, upon Him, prithee, call,
For to save us one and all.

From the Greek.

HERSELF A ROSE WHO BORE THE ROSE

(CHRISTINA ROSSETTI)

HERSELF a rose, who bore the Rose,
She bore the Rose and felt its thorn.
All loveliness new-born
Took on her bosom its repose,
And slept and woke there night and morn.

Lily herself, she bore the one
Fair Lily ; sweeter, whiter, far
Than she or others are :
The Sun of Righteousness her Son,
She was His morning star.

She gracious, He essential Grace,
He was the Fountain, she the rill :
Her goodness to fulfil
And gladness, with proportioned pace
He led her steps thro' good and ill.

HERSELF A ROSE WHO BORE THE ROSE

Christ's mirror she of grace and love,
Of beauty and of life and death :
By hope and love and faith
Transfigured to His likeness, ' Dove,
Spouse, Sister, Mother,' Jesus saith.

From ' Poetical Works ' (Macmillan).

*VIRGO GLORIOSA, MATER
AMANTISSIMA*

(LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY)

VINES branching stilly
Shade the open door
In the house of Zion's Lily,
Cleanly and poor.
O brighter than wild laurel
The Babe bounds in her hand,—
The King who for apparel
Hath but a swaddling-band,
And sees her heavenlier smiling, than stars in His
command!

Soon mystic changes
Part Him from her breast.
Yet there awhile He ranges
Gardens of rest ;
Yea, she, the first to ponder
Our ransom and recall,
Awhile may rock Him under
Her young curls' fall,
Against that only sinless Love-loyal heart of all.

VIRGO GLORIOSA, MATER AMANTISSIMA

What shall inure Him
Unto the deadly dream,
When the Tetrarch shall abjure Him,
The thief blaspheme,
And scribe and soldier jostle
About the shameful Tree,
And even an Apostle
Demands to touch and see?—
But she hath kissed her Flower, where the
Wounds are to be.

From 'The Martyrs' Idyll' (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.).

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

(GILBERT K. CHESTERTON)

THE Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,
His hair was like a light.
(O weary, weary were the world,
But here is all aright.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast,
His hair was like a star.
(O stern and cunning are the kings,
But here the true hearts are.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,
His hair was like a fire.
(O weary, weary is the world,
But here the world's desire.)

The Christ-child stood at Mary's knee,
His hair was like a crown,
And all the flowers looked up at Him,
And all the stars looked down.

From 'The Wild Knight, and Other Poems' (Dent).

CONSERVABAT IN CORDE

(AUBREY DE VERE)

As every change of April sky
Is imaged in the unchangeful brook,
Her meditative memory
Mirrored His every deed and look.

As suns through summer ether rolled
Mature each growth the spring has wrought,
Her love's calm solstice turned to gold
Her harvests of quiescent thought.

Her soul was as a vase, and shone
Illumed but with the interior ray ;
Her Maker's finger wrote thereon
A mystic Bible new each day.

Deep Heart ! in all His sevenfold might
The Paraclete with thee abode,
And, sacramented there in light,
Bare witness of the things of God.

From ' May Carols ' (Burns and Oates).

THE CHILD JESUS

A RECORD TYPICAL OF THE FIVE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

(JAMES COLLINSON)

JOSEPH, a carpenter of Nazareth,
And his wife, Mary, had an only Child,
Jesus: One holy from His mother's womb.
Both parents loved Him: Mary's heart alone
Beat with His blood, and, by her love and His,
She knew that God was with her, and she strove
Meekly to do the work appointed her;
To cherish Him with undivided care
Who deigned to call her mother, and who loved
From her the name of Son. And Mary gave
Her heart to Him, and feared not; yet she seemed
To hold as sacred that He said and did;
And, unlike other women, never spake
His words of innocence again; but all
Were humbly treasured in her memory
With the first secret of His birth. So strong
Grew her affection, as the Child increased
In wisdom and in stature with his years,

THE CHILD JESUS

That many mothers wondered, saying : ‘ These
Our little ones claim in our hearts a place
The next to God ; but Mary’s tenderness
Grows almost into reverence for her child.
Is he not of herself ? I’ the temple when
Kneeling to pray, on him she bends her eyes,
As though God only heard her prayer through him.
Is he to be a prophet ? Nay, we know
That out of Galilee no prophet comes.’

But all their children made the Boy their friend.

* * * * *

THE CRUCIFIXION

Joseph had one ewe-sheep ; and she brought forth,
Early one season, and before her time,
A weakly lamb. It chanced to be upon
Jesus’ birthday, when He was eight years old.
So Mary said, ‘ We’ll name it after Him ’
(Because she ever thought to please her Child,)
‘ And we will sign it with a small red cross
Upon the back, a mark to know it by.’
And Jesus loved the lamb ; and, as it grew,
Spotless and pure and loving like Himself,
White as the mother’s milk it fed upon,
He gave not up His care, till it became

THE CHILD JESUS

Of strength enough to browse ; and then, because
Joseph had no land of his own, being poor,
He sent away the lamb to feed amongst
A neighbour's flock, some distance from his home ;
Where Jesus went to see it every day.
One late Spring eve, their daily work being done,
Mother and Child, according to their wont,
Went, hand in hand, their chosen evening walk.
A pleasant wind rose from the sea, and blew
Light flakes of waving silver o'er the fields
Ready for mowing, and the golden West
Warmed half the sky : the low sun flickered through
The hedge-rows as they passed ; while hawthorn-trees
Scattered their snowy leaves and scent around.
The sloping woods were rich in varied leaf,
And musical in murmur and in song.

Long ere they reached the field, the wistful lamb
Saw them approach, and ran from side to side
The gate, pushing its eager face between
The lowest bars, and bleating for pure joy.
And Jesus, kneeling by it, fondled with
The little creature, that could scarce find how
To show its love enough, licking His hands,
Then, starting from Him, gambolled back again,
And, with its white feet upon Jesus' knees,
Nestled its head by His : and, as the sun

THE CHILD JESUS

Sank down behind them, broadening as it neared
The low horizon, Mary thought it seemed
To clothe them like a glory. But her look
Grew thoughtful, and she said : ' I had, last night,
A wandering dream. This brings it to my mind ;
And I will tell it Thee as we walk home.
I dreamed a weary way I had to go
Alone, across an unknown land—such wastes
We sometimes see in visions of the night,
Barren and dimly lighted. There was not
A tree in sight, save one seared leafless trunk,
Like a rude cross ; and, scattered here and there,
A shrivelled thistle grew. The grass was dead,
And the starved soil glared through its scanty tufts
In bare and chalky patches, cracked and hot,
Chafing my tired feet, that caught upon
Its parchèd surface. For, a thirsty sun
Had sucked all moisture from the ground it burned,
And, red and glowing, stared upon me like
A furnace-eye, when all the flame is spent.
I felt it was a dream ; and so, I tried
To close my eyes, and shut it out from sight.
Then, sitting down, I hid my face ; but this
Only increased the dread ; and so I gazed
With open eyes into my dream again.
The mists had thickened, and had grown quite black
Over the sun ; and darkness closed round me.

THE CHILD JESUS

(Thy father said it thundered towards the morn.)
But soon, far off, I saw a dull green light
Break through the clouds, which fell across the earth,
Like death upon a bad man's upturned face.
Sudden it burst with fifty forked darts
In one white flash, so dazzling bright it seemed
To hide the landscape in one blaze of light.
When the loud crash that came down with it had
Rolled its long echo into stillness, through
The calm dark silence came a plaintive sound ;
And, looking towards the tree, I saw that it
Was scorched with the lightning ; and there stood,
Close to its foot, a solitary sheep,
Bleating upon the edge of a deep pit,
Unseen till now, choked up with briars and thorns :
And into this a little snow-white lamb,
Like to Thine own, had fallen. It was dead
And cold, and must have lain there very long ;
While, all the time, the mother had stood by,
Helpless, and moaning with a piteous bleat.
The lamb had struggled much to free itself,
For, many cruel thorns had torn its head
And bleeding feet ; and one had pierced its side,
From which flowed blood and water. Strange the things
We see in dreams, and hard to understand—
For, stooping down to raise its lifeless head,
I thought it changed into the quiet face .

THE CHILD JESUS

Of my own Child. Then I awoke, and saw
The dim moon shining through the watery clouds
On Thee awake, within Thy little bed.'

Then Jesus, looking up, said quietly :
' We read that God will speak to those He loves
Sometimes in visions. He might speak to thee
Of things to come His mercy partly veils
From thee, my Mother ; or, perhaps, the thought
Floated across thy mind of what we read
Aloud, before we went to rest last night :
I mean that passage in Isaia's book
Which tells about the patient suffering lamb,
And which it seems that no one understands.'
Then Mary bent her face to the Child's brow,
And kissed Him twice, and, parting back His hair,
Kissed Him again. And Jesus felt her tears
Drop warm upon His cheek, and He looked sad,
When silently He put His hand again
Within His Mother's. As they came, they went,
Hand in hand homeward.

And the Child abode
With Mary and with Joseph, till the time
When all the things should be fulfilled in Him
Which God had spoken by His prophets' mouth
Long since ; and God was with Him, and God's grace.

From 'The Germ.'

*(FOR THE FEAST OF) THE
ANNUNCIATION OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY*

(JOHN KEBLE)

OH! Thou who deign'st to sympathize
With all our frail and fleshly ties,
Maker yet Brother dear,
Forgive the too presumptuous thought,
If, calming wayward grief, I sought
To gaze on Thee too near.

Yet sure 'twas not presumption, Lord,
'Twas Thine own comfortable word
That made the lesson known :
Of all the dearest bonds we prove,
Thou countest sons' and mothers' love
Most sacred, most Thine own.

When wandering here a little span,
Thou took'st on Thee to rescue man,
Thou hadst no earthly sire :
That wedded love we prize so dear,
As if our Heaven and home were here,
It lit in Thee no fire.

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE VIRGIN MARY

On no sweet sister's faithful breast
Wouldst Thou Thine aching forehead rest,
On no kind brother lean :
But who, O perfect filial heart,
E'er did like Thee a true son's part,
Endearing, firm, serene ?

Thou wept'st, meek Maiden, Mother mild,
Thou wept'st upon thy sinless Child,
Thy very heart was riven :
And yet, what mourning matron here
Would deem thy sorrows bought too dear
By all on this side Heaven ?

A Son that never did amiss,
That never shamed His mother's kiss,
Nor crossed her fondest prayer ;
Even from the Tree He deigned to bow
For her His agonized brow,
Her, His sole earthly care.

Ave Maria ! blessed Maid !
Lily of Eden's fragrant shade,
Who can express the love
That nurtured thee so pure and sweet,
Making thy heart a shelter meet
For Jesus' holy Dove ?

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE VIRGIN MARY

Ave Maria! Mother blest,
To whom, caressing and caressed,
Clings the Eternal Child;
Favoured beyond archangels' dream,
When first on thee with tenderest gleam
Thy new-born Saviour smiled:

Ave Maria! thou whose name
All but adoring love may claim,
Yet may we reach thy shrine;
For He, thy Son and Saviour, vows
To crown all lowly lofty brows
With love and joy like thine.

Blest is the womb that bare Him—blest
The bosom where His lips were pressed;
But rather blest are they
Who hear His word and keep it well,
The living homes where Christ shall dwell,
And never pass away.

From 'The Christian Year.'

AT CANA

(FATHER JOHN FITZPATRICK, O.M.I.)

To Cana, at her heart's behest,
Comes Mary, as a wedding-guest ;
For who at such a time could aid
A maiden, as the Mother-Maid ?

Jesus and His disciples, too,
Have here their place of rendezvous ;
And men have come His face to see
From many parts of Galilee.

Therefore the blushful wine has ceased
To flow, ere ends the marriage-feast ;
If Mary's pity not dispense
The vintage of her providence.

Ha !—To her Son, her virgin vine,
Like Spring she says, ' They have no wine ' ;
But He, until His hour, defers
To hearken to this hope of hers.

AT CANA

Yet, seeing in His gracious mien
The wished-for grapes already green,
She whispers to the waiters, 'Do
Whatever He shall say to you.'

(With Jesus 'tis a habit still
To yield Him to His Mother's will,
For passed their hidden life away
But with the breath of yesterday.)

Six water-jars, at His command,
Are brimmed with water where they stand;
And when He bids, 'Draw out and bear,'
Lo! floods of sudden wine are there.

In sooth, at Mary's prayer of power,
The grapes of God have reached their hour,
Ripening 'neath those sunny skies,
The heaven of her entreating eyes.

Vain soon that olden sneer shall be,
'Can good come out of Galilee?'
Even now good wine the pitcher fills,
When Mary prays and Jesus wills.

And henceforth, when these friends are met,
Lips, with some common vintage wet,
Will thrill with evidence divine
And Cana's wondrous wedding-wine.

THE SILVER WEDDING

TO MY LADY I RENDER THANKS

(ALFRED GURNEY)

FAIR shines the harvest moon to-night
In silver pomp ; but not so bright
As in your eyes love's beacon-light.
The day returns whose tender mood,
Ever remembered and renewed,
Enhances love's beatitude.
Your yielded hand I kneel and kiss—
Our Lady's grace be praised for this !
The love I bear your loveliness
No words can fittingly express ;
Nor can I worthily proclaim
Your worth ; yet will I try to frame
Some rhymes that shall embalm your name.

If loving words make music sweet
Whene'er we part, whene'er we meet,
I hear the words that Mary said
When she was angel-visited ;

THE SILVER WEDDING

If tender eyes return my gaze,
I picture Mary's smile, and praise
The Wisdom that was fain to make
All women gracious for her sake,
Whose was the plenitude of grace,
The Chosen of the chosen race.
I see her mirrored in your face.

Sweeter than sweetest roses far,
And lovelier than lilies are,
All, all, that is most pure, most good,
In God-created womanhood
She was, and is—a virgin soul,
The stars compose her aureole,
The sunbeams clothe her, at her feet
The moonlight gathers soft and sweet ;
In her all excellencies meet.

Her daughter and handmaiden, you
Have done what love alone can do ;
Numbered with those who learn of her
To play the part of comforter,
Whose lips, conversant with her song,
Her lofty minstrelsy prolong ;
Numbered with those whose feet pursue
Her footsteps all life's journey through,
Her daughter and her sister too.

THE SILVER WEDDING

Beneath the love-light of your eyes
With homage, gratitude, surprise,
I kneel your yielded hand to kiss—
Our Lady's name be blest for this !
My life to gladden, sweeten, bless,
To soothe its griefs, its ills redress,
You have revealed your loveliness.
Soft shines the silver moon to-night,
A lady robed in bridal white
Whose smile turns darkness into light.

From 'Love's Fruition' (Longmans).

MARY

(EDWARD HARDING)

HUMBLEST of all! who aye to God appealed
That but to Him thy greatness might be known :
Thy Father heard thy prayer, and He alone
Saw the supernal power thou wouldst not wield ;
Thy Son heard likewise, and, from all concealed,
Thy wisdom shone, the reflex of His own ;
Heard, too, thy Spouse—though partner of His throne,
His works scarce outline of thy history yield.
' I wilt exalt the humble,' saith the Lord :
And now, with Motherhood of God and men,
Beloved and blest beyond all human ken,
Thou art the full fulfilment of His word.
That God would have thine all thou didst entreat—
And lo! the very Heavens are at thy feet.

From ' Sonnets and Other Verses ' (Elliot Stock).

*SANCTA MARIA DOLORUM;
OR,
THE MOTHER OF SORROWS*

A PATHETICAL DESCANT
UPON THE DEVOUT PLAIN-SONG
OF 'STABAT MATER DOLOROSA'

(RICHARD CRASHAW)

IN shade of Death's Sad Tree
Stood doleful She;
Ah, She! now by none other
Name to be known, alas! but Sorrow's Mother.
Before her eyes
Hers and the whole world's Joys,
Hanging, all torn, she sees, and in His woes
And pains her pangs and throes.
Each wound of His from every part
All more at home in her own heart.

What kind of marble, than,*
Is that cold man
Who can look on and see,
Nor keep such noble sorrows company?

* Then.

SANCTA MARIA DOLORUM

Sure even from you,
My flints, some drops are due,
To see so many unkind swords contest
So fast for one soft breast ;
While with a faithful, mutual flood
Her eyes bleed tears, His Wounds weep blood !

O costly intercourse
Of deaths, and worse,
Divided loves ; while Son and Mother
Discourse alternate wounds to one another !
Quick deaths that grow
And gather, as they come and go :
His nails write swords in her ; which soon her heart
Pays back, with more than their own smart ;
Her swords, still growing with His pain,
Turn spears, and straight come home again.

She sees her Son, her God,
Bow with a load
Of borrowed sins, and swim
In woes that were not made for Him.
Ah ! hard command
Of love ! here must she stand,
Charged to look on, and with a steadfast eye
See her life die ;
Leaving her only so much breath
As serves to keep alive her death.

SANCTA MARIA DOLORUM

O Mother Turtle-dove !
Soft source of Love !
That these dry lids might borrow
Something from thy full seas of sorrow !
O, in that breast
Of thine (the noblest nest
Both of Love's fires and floods) might I recline
This hard, cold heart of mine !
The chill lump would relent, and prove
Soft subject for the Siege of Love !

O, teach those wounds to bleed
In me ; me, so to read
This book of loves, thus writ
In lines of death : my life may copy it
With loyal cares.
O, let me here claim shares !
Yield something in thy sad prerogative,
Great Queen of Griefs, and give
Me too my tears, who, though all stone,
Think much that thou shouldst mourn alone.

Yea, let my life and me
Fix here with thee,
And at the humble foot
Of this fair Tree take our eternal root,

SANCTA MARIA DOLORUM

That so we may
At least be in Love's way ;
And in these chaste wars, while the winged wounds
flee

So fast 'twixt Him and thee,
My breast may catch the kiss of some kind dart,
Though as at second hand, from either heart.

O you, your own best darts,
Dear doleful hearts !
Hail, and strike home, and make me see
That wounded bosoms their own weapons be.
Come wounds ! come darts !
Nailed hands ! and piercèd hearts !
Come, your whole selves, Sorrow's great Son and
Mother,
Nor grudge a younger brother
Of griefs his portion, who (had all their due)
One single wound should not have left for you.

Shall I set there
So deep a share,
Dear wounds ! and only now
In sorrows draw no dividend with you ?
O, be more wise,
If not more soft, mine eyes !

SANCTA MARIA DOLORUM

Flow, tardy founts! and into decent showers
Dissolve my days and hours :
And if thou yet, faint soul, defer
To bleed with Him, fail not to weep with her.

Rich Queen, lend some relief,
At least an alms of grief,
To a heart who, by sad right of sin,
Could prove the whole sum, too sure, due to him.
By all those stings
Of love, sweet bitter things,
Which these torn hands transcribed on thy true heart ;
O teach mine too the art
To study Him so, till we mix
Wounds, and become one crucifix.

O let me suck the wine
So long of this chaste Vine,
Till drunk of the dear wounds, I be
A lost thing to the world, as it to me !
O faithful Friend
Of me, and of my end !
Fold up my life in love, and lay 't beneath
My dear Lord's vital death.
Lo, heart, thy hope's whole plea ! her precious breath
Poured out in prayers for thee—thy Lord's in death.

MATER DOLOROSA

(FATHER JOHN FITZPATRICK, O.M.I.)

SHE stands, within the shadow, at the foot
Of the high tree she planted : thirty-three
Full years have sped, and such has grown to be
The stem that bourgeoned forth from Jesse's root.
Spring swiftly passed, and panted in pursuit
An eager summer ; now she stands to see
The only fruit-time of her only tree ;
And all the world is waiting for the fruit.

Now is faith's sad fruition : this one hour
Of gathered expectation wears the crown
Of the long grief with which the years were rife,
As in her lap—a sudden autumn shower—
The earthquake with his trembling hand shakes down
The red, ripe fruitage of the tree of life.

From ' Virgo Praedicanda ' (Washbourne).

THE DEBTOR CHRIST

(FATHER JOHN B. TABB)

WHAT, Woman, is my debt to thee,
That I should not deny
The boon Thou dost demand of me?—
I gave Thee power to die!

SONNET TO MARY

(HENRI ROCHEFORT, IN 1855)

THEE, whom the primal curse dared not attain—
Who, born in shadow, gavest us the light ;
Queen, more by heart than crown ; in love's despite
A Virgin, yea, a Mother without stain—
Thee here I love, as there, where thou dost reign,
My prayer beseeches ; for the highest height
Of thy Son's Heaven is thine—thine by the right
Of His red laver and thy tears of pain.

Mankind turns first to thee for every good,
Where thou art throned in God's own neighbourhood,
Flower-crowned and sunbeam-sceptred. At thy name
All things bend low, all cleanse them at thy flame,
All praise thee, Mary !—Yet, what woman would
Have braved thy sorrows, even for thy fame ?

From the French : Father John Fitzpatrick, O.M.I.

THE PASSION OF MARY

(FRANCIS THOMPSON)

O LADY Mary, thy bright crown
Is no mere crown of majesty ;
F'or with the reflex of His own
Resplendent thorns Christ circled thee.

The red rose of this passion-tide
Doth take a deeper hue from thee,
In the five Wounds of Jesus dyed,
And in thy bleeding thoughts, Mary.

The soldier struck a triple stroke
That smote thy Jesus on the Tree ;
He broke the Heart of hearts, and broke
The Saint's and Mother's hearts, in thee.

Thy Son went up the Angels' ways,
His passion ended ; but, ah me !
Thou found'st the road of further days
A longer way of Calvary.

On the hard cross of hope deterred,
Thou hung'st in loving agony,
Until the mortal-dreaded word
Which chills our mirth, spake mirth to thee.

THE PASSION OF MARY

The Angel Death from this cold tomb
Of life did roll the stone away ;
And He thou barest in thy womb
Caught thee at last into the day—
Before the living throne of whom
The lights of Heaven burning pray.

L'ENVOY

O thou who dwellest in the day,
Behold, I pace amidst the gloom :
Darkness is ever round my way
With little space for sunbeam-room.

Yet Christian sadness is divine,
Even as thy patient sadness was :
The salt tears in our life's dark wine
Fell in it from the saving Cross.

Bitter the bread of our repast ;
Yet doth a sweet the bitter leaven :
Our sorrow is the shadow cast
Around it by the light of Heaven.

O Light in light, shine down from Heaven.

THE MOTHER MARY

(GEORGE MACDONALD)

MARY, to thee the heart was given
For infant hand to hold,
And clasp thus, an eternal heaven,
The great earth in its fold.

He seized the world with tender might
By making thee His own ;
Thee, lowly queen, whose heavenly height
Was to thyself unknown.

He came, all helpless, to thy power,
For warmth, and love, and birth ;
In thy embraces, every hour,
He grew into the earth.

Thine was the grief, O Mother high,
Which all thy sisters share
Who keep the gate betwixt the sky
And this our lower air ;

THE MOTHER MARY

But unshared sorrows, gathering slow,
Will rise within thy heart—
Strange thoughts which like a sword will go
Thorough thy inward part.

For, if a woman bore a son
That was of angel brood,
Who lifted wings ere day was done,
And soared from where she stood,

Wild grief would rave on love's high throne ;
She, sitting in the door,
All day would cry : ' He was my own,
And now is mine no more !'

So thou, O Mary, years on years,
From child-birth to the Cross,
Wast filled with yearnings, filled with fears,
Keen sense of love and loss.

His childish thoughts outsoared thy reach ;
His godlike tenderness
Would sometimes seem, in human speech,
To thee than human less.

Strange pangs await thee, Mother mild.
A sorer travail-pain ;
Then will the spirit of thy Child
Be born in thee again.

THE MOTHER MARY

Till then thou wilt forebode and dread ;
Loss will be still thy fear—
Till He be gone, and in His stead
His very self appear.

For, when thy Son hath reached His goal,
And vanished from the earth,
Soon wilt thou find Him in thy soul.
A second, holier birth.

From ' Poetical Works ' (Chatto and Windus).

MATER INTEMERATA

(FATHER JOSEPH KEATING, S.J.)

HAIL, Queen triumphant ! On thy brow of snow
Laurel and lily, rose and myrtle meet ;
That false fierce head lies crushed beneath thy feet,
And broken is the might that brought man low.
God's love inspired, God's wisdom planned it so—
Since of the tree accurst did woman eat,
That woman, crowned with sinlessness complete,
Should share with Christ in Satan's overthrow.

What matters Eden lost, and woes and fears !
Our race is nobler for that trespass dire ;
God is made Man to raise the curse of years,
And fallen Nature soars in Mary higher
Than were the gates ne'er closed, nor in Eve's tears
Shone the far glitter of that sword of fire.

From ' Mariale Novum ' (Longmans).

A VE

(DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI)

MOTHER of the Fair Delight,
Thou handmaid perfect in God's sight,
Now sitting fourth beside the Three,—
Thyself a woman-Trinity,—
Being a daughter born to God,
Mother of Christ from stall to rood,
And wife unto the Holy Ghost :—
Oh when our need is uttermost,
Think that to such as death may strike
Thou once wert sister sisterlike !
Thou headstone of humanity,
Groundstone of the great Mystery,
Fashioned like us, yet more than we !

Mind'st thou not (when June's heavy breath
Warmed the long days in Nazareth,)
That eve thou didst go forth to give
Thy flowers some drink that they might live
One faint night more amid the sands ?
Far off the trees were as pale wands

Against the fervid sky : the sea
Sighed further off eternally
As human sorrow sighs in sleep.
Then suddenly the awe grew deep,
As of a day to which all days
Were footsteps in God's secret ways :
Until a folding sense, like prayer,
Which is, as God is, everywhere,
Gathered about thee ; and a voice
Spake to thee without any noise,
Being of the silence : ' Hail,' it said,
' Thou that art highly favoured ;
The Lord is with thee here and now ;
Blessed among all women thou.'

Ah ! knew'st thou of the end, when first
That Babe was on thy bosom nurs'd ?—
Or when He tottered round thy knee
Did thy great sorrow dawn on thee ?—
And through His boyhood, year by year,
Eating with Him the Passover
Didst thou discern confusedly
That holier Sacrament, when He,
The bitter cup about to quaff,
Should break the bread and eat thereof?—
Or came not yet the knowledge, even
Till on some day forecast in Heaven

AVE

His feet passed through thy door to press
Upon His Father's business?—
Or still was God's high secret kept?

Nay, but I think the whisper crept
Like growth through childhood. Work and play,
Things common to the course of day,
Awed thee with meanings unfulfill'd;
And all through girlhood, something still'd
Thy senses like the birth of light,
When thou hast trimmed thy lamp at night,
Or washed thy garments in the stream;
To whose white bed had come the dream
That He was thine and thou wast His
Who feeds among the field-lilies.
O solemn shadow of the end
In that wise spirit long contain'd!
O awful end! and those unsaid
Long years when It was Finished!

Mind'st thou not (when the twilight gone
Left darkness in the house of John,)
Between the naked window-bars
That spacious vigil of the stars?—
For thou, a watcher even as they,
Wouldst rise from where throughout the day

AVE

Thou wroughtest raiment for His poor ;
And, finding the fixed terms endure
Of day and night which never brought
Sounds of His coming chariot,
Wouldst lift through cloud-waste unexplor'd
Those eyes which said, ' How long, O Lord ?'
Then that disciple whom He loved,
Well heeding, haply would be moved
To ask thy blessing in His name ;
And that one thought in both, the same
Though silent, then would clasp ye round
To weep together,—tears long bound,
Sick tears of patience, dumb and slow.
Yet, ' Surely I come quickly,'—so
He said, from life and death gone home.
Amen : even so, Lord Jesus, come !

But oh ! what human tongue can speak
That day when Michael came* to break
From the tir'd spirit, like a veil,
Its covenant with Gabriel
Endured at length unto the end ?
What human thought can apprehend
That mystery of motherhood
When thy Beloved at length renew'd

* A Church legend of the Blessed Virgin's death.

AVE

The sweet communion severèd,—
His left hand underneath thine head
And his right hand embracing thee?—
Lo ! He was thine, and this is He !

Soul, is it Faith, or Love, or Hope,
That lets me see her standing up
Where the light of the Throne is bright ?
Unto the left, unto the right,
The cherubim, succinct, conjoint,
Float inward to a golden point,
And from between the seraphim
The glory issues for a hymn.
O Mary Mother, be not loth
To listen,—thou whom the stars clothe,
Who seëst and mayst not be seen !
Hear us at last, O Mary Queen !
Into our shadow bend thy face,
Bowing thee from the secret place,
O Mary Virgin, full of grace !

From 'Poetical Works' (Ellis and Elvey).

THE ASSUMPTION

(FATHER JOHN B. TABB)

NOR Bethlehem nor Nazareth
 Apart from Mary's care,
Nor Heaven itself a home for Him,
 Were not His Mother there.

*ON THE GLORIOUS
ASSUMPTION OF
OUR BLESSED LADY*

(RICHARD CRASHAW)

HARK! She is called, the parting hour is come ;
Take thy farewell, poor World ! Heaven must go home.
A piece of heavenly earth purer and brighter
Than the chaste stars, whose choice lamps come to light her,
While through the crystal orbs, clearer than they,
She climbs, and makes a far more Milky Way.
She's called. Hark ! how the dear immortal Dove
Sighs to his silver mate : ' Rise up, my Love !
Rise up, my fair, my spotless One !
The winter's past, the rain is gone ;
The spring is come ; the flowers appear—
No sweets but thou are wanting here.

Come away, my Love !

Come away, my Dove !

Cast off delay :

The court of Heaven is come

To wait upon thee home ;

Come, come away.

THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR BLESSED LADY

The flowers appear,
Or quickly would, wert thou once here.
The spring is come, or, if it stay,
'Tis to keep time with thy delay.
The rain is gone, except so much as we
Detain in needful tears, to weep the want of thee.

The winter's past,
Or, if he make less haste,
His answer is, why she does so,
If summer come not, how can winter go ?

Come away, come away.
The shrill winds chide ; the waters weep thy stay ;
The fountains murmur ; and each loftiest tree
Bows low'st his leafy top, to look for thee.

Come away, my Love !

Come away, my Dove !

Cast off delay :

The court of Heaven is come

To wait upon thee home ;

Come, come away.

She's called again. And will she go ?
When Heaven bids come, who can say no ?
Heaven calls her, and she must away ;
Heaven will not, and she cannot stay.
Go, then, go, Glorious ! on the golden wings
Of the bright youth of Heaven, that sings

THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR BLESSED LADY

Under so sweet a burthen. Go,
Since thy great Son will have it so ;
And while thou goest, our song and we
Will, as we may, reach after thee.
Hail, holy Queen of humble hearts !
We in thy praise will have our parts ;
And though thy dearest looks must now give light
To none but the blest Heavens, whose bright
Beholders, lost in sweet delight,
Feed for ever their fair sight
With those divinest eyes, which we
And our dark world no more shall see ;
Though our poor eyes are parted so,
Yet shall our lips never let go
Thy gracious name, but to the last
Our loving song shall hold it fast.

Thy precious name shall be
Thyself to us ; and we
With holy care will keep it by us.

We to the last
Will hold it fast,
And no Assumption shall deny us.
All the sweetest showers
Of our fairest flowers
Will we strew upon it :
Though our sweets cannot make
It sweeter, they can take
Themselves new sweetness from it.

THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR BLESSED LADY

Maria, men and Angels sing
Maria, Mother of our King.
Live, rosy Princess ! live ; and may the bright
Crown of a most incomparable light
Embrace thy radiant brows. O may the best
Of everlasting joys bathe thy white breast.
Live, our chaste Love ! the holy mirth
Of Heaven, the humble pride of earth.
Live, Crown of Women ! Queen of Men !
Live, Mistress of our song ! and when
Our weak desires have done their best,
Sweet Angels come and sing the rest.

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE GREAT MOTHER OF GOD

(RICHARD REEVE, O.S.B.)

. . . AND now, vain Earth, thou hast the charming Queen,
Prithee, how oft hast thou so honoured been ?
But why so adorned with flowers and why so gay ?
Thy beauteous Lodger has not long to stay :
She only visits thee in passing by,
And not to stay, as others do that die ;
No ! she's to mount to the empyreal sky.
Dost thou not see the glittering troops appear ?
They like the sun's bright rays shine from afar,
And fly with wondrous pomp and swiftness through the air.
Behold the Bridegroom's chariot, how it shines
With diamonds dug out of Heaven's mines ;
The airy coursers champ the bit and foam,
Impatient till they've wheeled their Mistress home. . . .

Whilst the vast Ocean thus of heavenly good
Within its own strong limits firmly stood,
Ebbing and flowing in eternal flood,

ASSUMPTION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

She joined her stream, and ebbcd and flowcd as they,
Like a small rivulet lost (in the sea).*
Thus far immersed in this divine abyss
Of melting raptures and transporting bliss,
Purely dissolved into the heavenly line,
She was no more herself, but all divine ;
Yet could not banish from her tender mind
Her dear co-partner sleeping still behind.
Their former strong alliance forced her love,
She sweetly mourned, as does the turtle-dove,
With melting sighs, the absence of her love.
For this bright spotless pair were so secure
From any blemish, so divinely pure,
That God Himself did prove her flesh might be
A rival to her soul in purity :
And most deservedly—for if it's fit
To examine titles her soul must submit.
For when His Incarnation did begin,
He chose her flesh to veil His Godhead in ;
Nor did her heavenly soul all this deny,
Though bathing in the stream of heavenly joy.
She loved her lonely partner left behind,
And wished each moment they might be rejoined,
Seeing so many radiant bodies shine
Of glorious Saints with rays of light divine ;
More yet—th' immortal members of her Son,
And well remembered when e'er they had begun :

* Or better, perhaps, the words crossed out, 'in that wide sea.'

ASSUMPTION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

And though she shone with light divinely clear,
Yet to herself she naked did appear,
And wished and wished her friendly flesh was there.

And now she speaks : ‘ Behold I am ’ (says she)
‘ Both Spouse and Daughter to the Deity ;
A triple emblem my bright soul does wear,
Wherein my great Creator’s Image does appear :
Memory, Knowledge, and Seraphic Love,
The Father, Son, and Sempiternal Dove.
But did I bear the Infant Deity,
Or help to clothe Him with humanity,
Or ever lull the little God to rest,
Stealing into His mouth the welcome breast ?
No, no ; ’twas my dear flesh performed that part,
And always bore a tender mother’s heart ;
And when He slept, she’d take a careful nod,
And sweetly slumber o’er the Infant God.
Thrice happy body, slumbering in the tomb,
That bor’st mankind’s Salvation in thy womb !
My poor endowments, when I think on thee,
How undeserving they appear to me !
What’s Memory, or Knowledge, or what’s Love—
Shall I alone be crowned a Queen above,
Whilst you, my dear co-partner, lie alone,
Shut in the horrors of the vaulted stone,
Who so much more than I deserve a throne ?

ASSUMPTION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

But our Creator, though He's good to me,
Will yet, without all doubt, be just to thee !'

Thus spoke her Soul ; and like a turtle-dove
She nothing whispered of her mate but love :
She now resolves to try her interest there
For a reunion with her sleeping dear.
' Behold, great God ' (says she), ' my Spouse and King,
I hope you'll not deny me anything ;
I have one request, and 'tis the first I make,
That you would compassion on my Body take,
Which lies below within the shades of night,
Whilst I am Queen o'er all the realms of light,
And lost in the fruition of your sight.'
The Almighty stops the fair Petitioner,
Commends her love, applauds her friendly care,
And says : ' Cease, lovely Fair, whom I have crowned
With all the glories that you see around ;
Cease, cease ; for what you would petition here
Was granted long before you left her there ;
Then spare your prayers, only be mine the charge ;
Repel all fear—she shall be soon at large.
Now, now the term's at hand you both shall meet,
And each with mutual kisses shall the other greet,
For absence makes reunion still more sweet.
My charming Spouse, you shall in splendour go
And fetch your Partner from the realms below.

ASSUMPTION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

She's laden with her merits, it is true,
And far more ponderous she is than you,
Yet you shall safely light her from the earth,
Full with victorious spoils of life and death.
Then go, my Fair ; no equipage demand :
All Heaven's Artillery is at your command.

Immediately the Heavens 'gan to shake ;
Yet all were hush when their Creator spake.
He spoke : then all with one consent did bow
With all the glorious Spirits there ; and now
The joyful orbs began again to roll,
And shouts of joy were heard from pole to pole.
The Eternal nods ; and all the signal take ;
A glorious sight the glittering Seraphs make.
Legions of Angels fill the ambient air,
And myriads of Cherubs to attend the Fair ;
All in an instant into order stepped,
Extending from the Throne to where she slept.
A radiant path behind, and on each side a line
Which like so many dazzling suns did shine.
All ready now, she does the signal give,
And with a lingering embrace she takes her leave ;
And now descends her Partner to release,
Attended by the Harbingers of Love and Peace.
And now behold on wing the Heavenly Fair
As swift as Meditation cuts the yielding air :

ASSUMPTION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

Her hymning guards sang anthems all the way,
The spheres made music, too, as well as they,
And all the elements were bright and gay ;
The clattering orbs a clamorous joy exprest,
And universal nature now again was blest.
By soft dimission, lo, the Charmer's come,
And like a dove alights upon the tomb ;
Re-enters her dear body, and the twain
Embrace, but never now to part again.
Immortal now's their juncture, which no time
Can e'er dissolve.

*From the Latin (J. Cumberlege). Copied from a
Rawlinson MS. in the Bodleian Library.*

OF THE ASSUMPTION

(SIR JOHN BEAUMONT)

WHO is she that ascends so high,
Next the Heavenly King,
Round about whom Angels fly
And her praises sing ?

Who is she that, adorned with light,
Makes the sun her robe,
At whose feet the queen of night
Lays her changing globe ?

To that crowd direct thine eye,
Which her head attires ;
There thou mayst her name descry
Writ in starry fires.

This is she in whose pure womb
Heaven's Prince remained ;
Therefore in no earthly tomb
Can she be contained.

OF THE ASSUMPTION

Heaven she was, which held that fire
 Whence the world took light,
And to Heaven doth now aspire,
 Flames with flames to unite.

She that did so clearly shine
 When our day begun,
See, how bright her beams decline
 Now she sits with the Sun.

ANCILLA DOMINI

(AUBREY DE VERE)

THE crown of Creatures, first in place,
Was, of all creatures, creature most :
By nature nothing ; all by grace ;
Redemption's first and loftiest boast.

Handmaid of God in heart and will,
Without His life she seemed a death,
A void that He alone could fill,
A word suspended on His breath.

Yet—void and nothing—she in Him
The Creature's sole perfection found ;
She was the great Rock's shadow dim ;
She was the silence, not the sound.

On golden airs, by Him upheld,
She knelt, a soft Subjection mute,
A hushed Dependance, tranced and spelled,
Still yearning towards the Absolute.

ANCILLA DOMINI

She was a sea-shell from the deep
Of God ; her function this alone
Of Him to whisper as in sleep,
In everlasting undertone.

This hour on Him her eyes are set !
And those who tread the earth she trod
Like her themselves in her forget,
And her remember but in God.

From ' May Carols ' (Burns and Oates).

ST. BERNARD'S PRAYER FOR DANTE

(‘PARADISO,’ CANTO XXXIII—ANONYMOUS)

‘ O Virgin Mother ! Daughter of thy Son !
Higher than aught beside ! more humbly low !
End by the Eternal Counsel fixed upon !
Thou’rt she, who humankind ennobled’st so,
That its Creator thought it not unmeet
His own Creation in thy womb to grow.
Wherein there was rekindled Love, whose heat
Has caused to germinate and bloom for aye
This flower,* in Peace eternal and complete.
Here unto us thou art the noontide ray
Of Charity ; to men below who die
Thou art the living fount of hope alway.
Lady ! thou art so great, thou art so high,
That he who needeth grace, and seeks not thee,
Is like to one who, wingless, yet would fly.
And not alone does thy benignity
Lend help to him who asks it, but the prayer
Ofttimes anticipates spontaneously.
In thee all grace, in thee all loving care
Unite with all of noble, all of high,
And all of good, created beings share.

* The great white rose which is the company of the Blessed.

ST. BERNARD'S PRAYER FOR DANTE

Lo! this man who hath seen successively
All spirit lives, as he ascending passed
E'en from Hell's lowest circles to this sky,
Entreats thee (by the mercy that thou hast)
For power to raise himself by further sight
Towards that weal which is the highest, last.
And I, who ne'er longed more for clearer light
For mine own self than I do for his sake,
Urge all my prayers (nor scanty be their might)
To thee, that thou wilt by thy own prayers make
Those clouds disperse, which dim his mortal view,
So that on him the Great Delight may break!
Further I pray, O Queen! (thou that canst do
Whate'er thou willest!) cause him to maintain,
After such sight, affections pure and true,
And let thy guard o'er human passion reign;
See, Beatrice and many of the Blest
Clasp hands, that what I ask, I now may gain!

Those eyes, by God revered, beloved the best.
Upon the speaker fixed, made evident
How dear to her is all devout request,
Then to the Light Eternal turned intent;
It cannot be believed so clear an eye
Thereon by any creature could be bent.

From 'Translations from Dante, etc.' (Kegan Paul).

*ON THE DEATH
OF MADONNA LAURA :
CANZONE VIII.*

(PETRARCH)

O Lovely Virgin who, soft-clothed in sun,
With waving hair thick-woven and crowned with stars,
Moved that great Sun to hide in you His light !
Love burns in me, forcing my pen that mars
Your perfectness with words ; but have I won
Your leave, and His who sheathed in you His might ?
(I call on her as though I had a right !)
Far in the eternal city,
O Virgin, if in pity
The extreme anguish of our human plight
Drown ever your deep eyes, bend to my cry,
Help in this mortal strife ;
Though I am dust, you Queen of Heaven so high.

Wise Virgin ! Sure the first of the bright group
Of vigilant virgins whose hearts never sleep ;
Even the first, and with the brightest flame ;
A magic breastplate tired hearts to keep
Who under lash of death and fortune stoop—

ON THE DEATH OF MADONNA LAURA

To keep and bring to triumph. Will you tame
And still, O Snow Maid, the fierce things that maim
Our souls, which else might rise?
Virgin, whose wondrous eyes
Looked on those men—who knew they hurrying came
To pierce the thin palms of your dearest Son—
Turn to me in my doubt,
Who other counsellor than you have none.

O Virgin pure and most inviolate!
O House of Gold! St. Jerome's 'Sea Spray Wild'
Garden Enclosed! Celestial pale Decoy!
Your Son and the great Father's, Undeiled,
Window of Heaven open early and late,
Through you, to save, came down a fragile boy—
In all the world would only you employ,
O Lady, as resting place.
Virgin, whose girlish face
Smiled on Eve's tears and turned them into joy!
Make me, if I can, answer all your graces,
O Blessed for ever and ever,
Crowned Queen and Empress of the supernal places!

O moving Vision! O soft rosy Flame,
From your humility's low dazzling deep
Springing to Heaven, where you hear my rime!
You are the source whence pity's floods did creep,

ON THE DEATH OF MADONNA LAURA

From your soft dawn came freedom and desire
Of freedom ; and the shadows fled from time.
Three dearest names in one for you we chime—
Mother and Daughter and Spouse.
Virgin, whose glorious brows
Bear the King's crown—who healèd with sublime
And tender craft our wounds in His own way!
Within His holy wounds
Hide deep, O Blessed One, my heart, I pray.

You stand for ever alone, O Virgin Spouse!
Virgin with child—fair marvel exquisite ;
Who fevered Heaven with desires three ;
Whose pitiful pure thoughts, so holy white,
Shone like soft torches in God's crystal house,
Your virginal body—bend down pityingly,
And let my desert like a garden be.
Nay, then, how should I speak,
I, inconsistent, weak ?—
There's nothing fit for your clear eyes in me.
Yet, oh, I thirst, and I am desolate !
Give me my joy again :
I ask a miracle, but you are great.

Consider, Sea Star, peaceful, starry-still,
Watching the rhythmic glories of the sky
That come and go like dreams about a bed—
Did not my Lady sicken, and then die,

ON THE DEATH OF MADONNA LAURA

And shatter all my courage and my will?—
I who had always mixed, when all is said,
Some poppies with the laurel on my head.
But, oh, for years and years
To know the silent tears
That fall within, and shall till I am dead!
Think, Sea Star, Ivory Tower, All Heaven's Gate—
Because of human sin
God took a little Syrian girl to mate.

Then pity my dark monotone of years!
Bend down, O Virgin, pityingly, and look—
In spite of all my infidelity
Since first the sound of rushing Arno struck
My imagination waking. No man fears
To ask a favour of the hand that He
Held with His dimpled hand when timidly
He tried to learn to walk.
Nay, nay, we will not talk
Of where his feet walked later—to what tree;
And, oh, do not be long, for there is Death,
And I'm joy-hungry—joy-starved:
Did you not pour his milk at Nazareth?

Virgin, it is so long since Laura died!
And when she was on earth my Ecstasy
Ate at one board and shared her loaf with Pain
For though my verses murmured like the sea,

ON THE DEATH OF MADONNA LAURA

Tide in tide out, and rippled at her side,
And though I tried again and yet again,
She would turn from me—she would droop and wane.
I think my infinite dream
And infinite woe did seem
Strange and remote to her. But you, oh, deign
To lend your glorious, exalted senses!
Unhood my falcon heart,
You who know all before the song commences.

And when, O Virgin, I shall come to die,
Remember that the poet is but a child,
And hush me with the little drowsy song
That soothed Him when His eyes with dreams were wild
And the vague mystery of the night was by.
He was a frightened child . . . nay, your eyes throng
With memories . . . and let it not be long,
The drowsiness; but croon,
And bring deep slumber soon.
And now it seems to me—oh, is it wrong—
I feel your tears fall on my tired head.
Laura-Medusa, see!
The blood you turned to stone is warm, is red.

O Virgin, you were human, mortal, near,
Cleaving to earth in your humility:

ON THE DEATH OF MADONNA LAURA

Have pity on this sentient heart, and wake
And make it yours ; you know, and you did see
How it could hold a mortal woman dear.
Think, O you lovely thing, for your white sake
What it will do—what fastness it will take.
So, Virgin, bless my arms,
And keep me from all harms ;
And I will serve you sleeping and awake :
Bless my poor weapons—all my rimes and stresses,
My strong fourteen-fold shield,
My lithe canzoni strung with your bright tresses.

And when I fall, seeing I wear your sleeve,
Succour me, Holy One,
Sun that outshines the sun !
Permit not that I faint alone and grieve.
Commend me to your Son that, when I cease
To breathe this air, He may,
True God and Man, plunge deep my soul in peace.

*From 'On the Death of Madonna Laura'—
Translated by Agnes Tobin (Heinemann).*

STANZAS FROM 'THE VOYAGE OF ST. BRENDAN'

(DENIS FLORENCE MAC CARTHY)

WE were alone on the wide watery waste—
Nought broke its bright monotony of blue,
Save where the breeze the flying billows chased,
Or where the clouds their purple shadows threw.
We were alone, the pilgrims of the sea,
One boundless azure desert round us spread ;
No hope, no trust, no strength, except in Thee,
Father ! who once the pilgrim-people led.

And when the bright-faced sun resigned his throne
Unto the Ethiop queen who rules the night,
Who, with her pearly crown and starry zone,
Fills the dark dome of heaven with silvery light,
As on we sailed, beneath her milder sway,
And felt within our hearts her holier power,
We ceased from toil, and humbly knelt to pray,
And hailed with vesper hymns the tranquil hour.

FROM 'THE VOYAGE OF ST. BRENDAN'

For then, indeed, the vaulted heavens appeared
A fitting shrine to hear their Maker's praise,
Such as no human architect has reared,
Where gems and gold and precious marbles blaze.
What earthly temple such a roof can boast,
What flickering lamp with the rich starlight vies,
When the round moon rests, like the Sacred Host,
Upon the azure altar of the skies?

We breathed aloud the Christian's filial prayer,
Which makes us brothers even with the Lord :
'Our Father,' cried we, in the midnight air,
'In heaven and earth be Thy great name adored ;
May Thy bright kingdom, where the angels are,
Replace this fleeting world so dark and dim.'
And then, with eyes fixed on some glorious star,
We sang the Virgin-Mother's vesper hymn.

'Hail, brightest Star! that o'er life's troubled sea
Shin'st pity down from heaven's elysian blue,
Mother and Maid! we fondly look to thee,
Fair Gate of bliss! where Heaven beams brightly through.
Star of the Morning! guide our youthful days,
Shine on our infant steps in life's long race ;
Star of the Evening! with thy tranquil rays
Gladden the aged eyes that seek thy face.

FROM 'THE VOYAGE OF ST. BRENDAN'

' Hail, sacred Maid ! thou brighter, better Eve,
Take from our eyes the blinding scales of sin ;
Within our hearts no selfish poison leave,
For thou the heavenly antidote canst win.
O sacred Mother ! 'tis to thee we run,
Poor children, from this world's oppressive strife ;
Ask all we need from thy immortal Son,
Who drank of death that we might taste of life.

' Hail, spotless Virgin ! mildest, meekest maid ;
Hail ! purest Pearl that Time's great sea hath borne :
May our white souls, in purity arrayed,
Shine as if they thy vestal robes had worn.
Make our hearts pure, as thou thyself art pure ;
Make safe the rugged pathway of our lives ;
And make us pass to joys that will endure
When the dark term of mortal life arrives.'

*MARY, MOTHER OF DIVINE
GRACE, COMPARED TO
THE AIR WE
BREATHE*

(FATHER GERARD HOPKINS, S.J.)

WILD air, world-mothering air,
Nestling me everywhere,
That each eyelash or hair
Girdles ; goes home betwixt
The fleeci-est, frailest-flixed
Snow-flake ; that's fairly mixed
With riddles, and is rife
In every least thing's life ;
This needful, never spent
And nursing element ;
My more than meat or drink,
My meal at every wink ;
This air which by life's law
My lung must draw and draw
Now, but to breathe its praise,—
Minds me in many ways

MARY, MOTHER OF DIVINE GRACE

Of her who not only
Gave God's infinity,
Dwindled to infancy,
Welcome in womb and breast,
Birth, milk, and all the rest,
But mothers each new grace
That does now reach our race,
Mary Immaculate,
Merely a woman, yet
Whose presence power is
Great as no goddess's
Was deemèd, dreamèd ; who
This one work has to do—
Let all God's glory through,
God's glory, which would go
Through her and from her flow
Off, and no way but so.

I say that we are wound
With mercy round and round,
As if with air : the same
Is Mary, more by name,
She, wild web, wondrous robe,
Mantles the guilty globe.
Since God has let dispense
Her prayers His providence,
Nay, more than almoner,
The sweet alms' self is her,

MARY, MOTHER OF DIVINE GRACE

And men are meant to share
Her life as life does air.

 If I have understood,
She holds high motherhood
Towards all our ghostly good,
And plays in grace her part
About man's beating heart,
Laying like air's fine flood
The death-dance in his blood ;
Yet no part but what will
Be Christ our Saviour still.
Of her flesh He took flesh :
He does take, fresh and fresh,
Though much the mystery how,
Not flesh but spirit now,
And wakes, O marvellous !
New Nazareths in us,
Where she shall yet conceive
Him, morning, noon, and eve ;
New Bethlems, and He born
There, evening, noon, and morn.
Bethlem or Nazareth,
Men here may draw like breath
More Christ, and baffle death ;
Who, born so, comes to be
New self, and nobler me

MARY, MOTHER OF DIVINE GRACE

In each one, and each one
More makes, when all is done,
Both God's and Mary's son.
Again, look overhead
How air is azured.
O how! Nay, do but stand
Where you can lift your hand
Skywards: rich, rich it laps
Round the four finger-gaps.
Yet such a sapphire-shot
Charged, steepèd sky will not
Stain light. Yea, mark you this:
It does no prejudice.
The glass-blue days are those
When every colour glows,
Each shape and shadow shows.
Blue be it: this blue heaven
The seven or seven times seven
Hued sunbeam will transmit
Perfect, nor alter it.
Or if there does some soft
On things aloof, aloft,
Bloom breathe, that one breath more
Earth is the fairer for.
Whereas did air not make
This bath of blue and slake
This fire, the sun would shake

MARY, MOTHER OF DIVINE GRACE

A blear and blinding ball
With blackness bound, and all
The thick stars round him roll,
Flashing like flecks of coal,
Quartz-fret, or sparks of salt
In grimy vasty vault.

So God was God of old ;
A mother came to mould
Those limbs like ours which are,
What must make our day-star
Much dearer to mankind :
Whose glory bare would blind
Or less would win man's mind.
Through her we may see Him
Made sweeter, not made dim,
And her hand leaves His light
Sifted to suit our sight.

Be thou, then, O thou dear
Mother, my atmosphere ;
My happier world wherein
To wend and meet no sin ;
Above me, round me lie
Fronting my froward eye
With sweet and scarless sky ;
Stir in my ears, speak there
Of God's love, O live air,
Of patience, penance, prayer ;

MARY, MOTHER OF DIVINE GRACE

World-mothering air, air wild,
Wound with thee, in thee isled,
Fold home, fast fold thy child.

*From Rev. C. H. Beeching's 'Book of
Christmas Verse' (Methuen).*

*LINES FROM 'A MAY
PAGEANT'**

(FATHER CASWALL)

GLORY to her, creation's pride,
In worth exceeding all beside,
Mother of Him from whom this frame
Of nature in its glory came,
Ere into being yet it burst
Its type of beauty from the first ;
Maria ! Life's immortal tree,
Mother of Immortality !
Maria ! Virtue's mirror bright,
Earth's miracle, the Heaven's delight !
Lovelier than all the gems of May,
Purer than dew, brighter than day,
Sweeter than any flower that blows,
More exquisite than opening rose,
Softer than balmy southern breeze,
Strong as the hills, deep as the seas,
Immeasurable as the sky,
Higher than all the spheres on high,

* Burns and Oates.

LINES FROM 'A MAY PAGEANT'

Virgin Immaculate, divine,
Joy of the ever-joyant Trine,
Virgin of virgins, purest, best,
All-fair, all-perfect, ever blest,
To whom as native Queen of May
All natural things their homage pay.

OUR LADY OF LOVE

(FATHER DAVID BEARNE, S.J.)

THROUGH all the storms thy name the throistle trilled
From topmost finial of the budding larch,
While breath of opening violets faintly filled
The dolorous winds of March.

Of thee the ousel's Easter carol rang
Within the milk-white pear and cherry bloom,
Until the silver rain of evening sang
From out the April gloom.

But May, with full-voiced chorus of all birds
Aloft in leafy tribunes blossom-dress'd,
Makes Mary-music as young Summer girds
The land from east to west.

The blossom falls, a shower of perfumed snow,
As on the whitethorn bough the birds alight ;
Faint shadows of thy sweetness come and go
From morn till moonlit night.

OUR LADY OF LOVE

For since, dear Lady, thou hast won my love,
And hast become sole Mistress of my heart,
Me no created beauty more may move
In which thou hast no part.

From 'Cantate Mariae' (Burns and Oates).

OUR LADY OF THE MAY

(LIONEL JOHNSON)

O FLOWER of Flowers, our Lady of the May!
Thou gavest us the World's one Light of Light :
Under the stars, amid the snows, He lay ;
While Angels through the Galilean* night
Sang glory and sang peace :
Nor doth their singing cease,
For thou their Queen and He their King sit crowned
Above the stars, above the bitter snows ;
They chaunt to thee the Lily, Him the Rose,
With white Saints kneeling round.
Gone is cold night : thine now are spring and day :
Flower of Flowers, our Lady of the May !

O Flower of Flowers, our Lady of the May !
Thou gavest us the blessed Christmas mirth :
And now, not snows, but blossoms, light thy way ;
We give thee the fresh flower-time of the earth.
Those early flowers we bring,
Are angels of the spring,

* Evidently the *Judean* night was meant.

OUR LADY OF THE MAY

Spirits of gracious rain and light and dew.

Nothing so like to thee the whole earth yields,
As these pure children of her vales and fields,
Bright beneath skies of blue.

Hail, Holy Queen ! their fragrant breathings say :
O Flower of Flowers, our Lady of the May !

O Flower of Flowers, our Lady of the May !

Breathe from God's garden of eternal flowers
Blessing, when we thy little children pray :
Let thy soul's grace steal gently over ours.

Send on us dew and rain,
That we may bloom again,
Nor wither in the dry and parching dust.

Lift up our hearts, till with adoring eyes,
O Morning Star ! we hail thee in the skies,
Star of our hope and trust !

Sweet Star, Sweet Flower, there bid thy beauty stay :
O Flower of Flowers, our Lady of the May !

O Flower of Flowers, our Lady of the May !

Thou leftest lilies rising from thy tomb :
They shone in stately and serene array,
Immaculate amid Death's house of gloom.

Ah, let thy graces be
Sown in our dark hearts ! We

OUR LADY OF THE MAY

Would make our hearts gardens for thy dear care ;
 Watered from wells of Paradise, and sweet
 With balm winds flowing from the Mercy-seat,
And full of heavenly air :
 While music ever in thy praise should play,
 O Flower of Flowers, our Lady of the May!

O Flower of Flowers, our Lady of the May !
 Not only for ourselves we plead, God's Flower !
Look on thy blinded children, who still stray,
 Lost in this pleasant land, thy chosen Dower !
 Send us a perfect spring :
 Let faith arise and sing,
And England from her long, cold winter wake.
 Mother of Mercy ! turn upon her need
 Thine eyes of mercy : be there spring indeed :
So shall thine Angels make
 A starrier music than our hearts can say,
 O Flower of Flowers, our Lady of the May !

From 'Ireland : With Other Poems'
(Elkin Matthews).

THE SPOTLESS MAID

(FATHER VINCENT McNABB, O.P.)

LADYE Marye ! to-day
Let me say my own say,
In my own daring way.

Yet if I dare, 'tis He
Must bear the blame, Who thee
So high made—and lowly.

When a fond son doth praise
His mother, what he says
Has it, think ye, two ways ?

Fairer than the rose, thou,
O my Mother's white brow !—
Dark is the snow-drift now.

Stars and sun have I seen :
Deep night-gloom have they been
To thy dear eyes' love-sheen.

THE SPOTLESS MAID

Men see the silver moon,
And cry, 'A godlike boon !'
God sets it 'neath thy shoon.

Men see the sun, and say,
'A god, it !'—God says, 'Nay,
But Mary's gown, sad grey.'

Once I look on thy light,
My weak eyes, dazed with fright,
Seek the sun, noonday-bright,

For rest ;—as, scorched with sun,
Oft for rest my eyes run
Unto earth's green homespun.

How glad all thy kith feel !
For he who sank our weal
Lies wrecked under thy heel.

Ne'er aught of thee or thine
Was the sly foul fiend's shrine ;
Thou art all God's—all mine !

All God's, all men's ! and thus
It is for us, for us,
He made thee glorious.

THE SPOTLESS MAID

Ladye Marye ! to-day
Is fall'n men's feast, for they
Lured thy dear Son thy way.

For us He yearned for earth ;
For us He dowered thy birth,
To turn our woe to mirth.

Thy crown is ours. And we
Are thine. And both shall be
Jesu's eternally.

AUXILIUM CHRISTIANORUM

(AUBREY DE VERE)

NOT for herself doth Mary hold
That Mother-Crown, that Queenly Throne ;
The loftiest in the Saviour's Fold
The least possesses of her own.

Pure thoughts that make to God their quest
With her find footing o'er the clouds,
Like those sea-crossing birds that rest
A moment on the sighing shrouds.

In her our hearts, no longer nursed
On dust, for spiritual beauty yearn ;
From her our instincts, as at first,
An upward gravitation learn.

Through her draw nigh the things remote :
For in true love's supernal sphere
No more round self the affections float,
More near to God, to man more near.

AUXILIUM CHRISTIANORUM

In her, the weary warfare past,
The port attained, the exile o'er,
We see the Church's bark at last
Close-anchored on the eternal shore !

From ' May Carols ' (Burns and Oates).

ITALIAN GIRL'S HYMN TO THE VIRGIN

(FELICIA HEMANS)

IN the deep hour of dreams,
Through the dark woods, and past the moaning sea,
And by the starlight gleams,
Mother of Sorrows, lo! I come to thee.

Unto thy shrine I bear
Night-blowing flowers, like my own heart, to lie
All, all unfolded there,
Beneath the meekness of thy pitying eye.

For thou, that once didst move,
In thy still beauty, through an earthly home,
Thou knowest the grief, the love,
The fear of woman's soul—to thee I come.

Many and sad and deep
Were the thoughts folded in thy silent breast :
Thou, too, couldst watch and weep—
Hear, gentlest Mother ! hear a heart opprest.

ITALIAN GIRL'S HYMN TO THE VIRGIN

There is a wandering bark
Bearing one from me o'er the restless wave :
Oh ! let thy soft eye mark
His course ; be with him, Holiest ! guide and save.

My soul is on that way ;
My thoughts are travellers o'er the waters dim ;
Through the long weary day
I walk, o'ershadowed by vain dreams of him.

Aid him ; and me, too, aid ;
Oh ! 'tis not well, this earthly love's excess :
On thy weak child is laid
The burden of too deep a tenderness.

Too much o'er him is poured
My being's hope, scarce leaving Heaven a part ;
Too fearfully adored,
Oh ! make not him the chastener of my heart.

I tremble with a sense
Of grief to be ; I hear a warning low :
Sweet Mother ! call me hence ;
This wild idolatry must end in woe.

ITALIAN GIRL'S HYMN TO THE VIRGIN

The troubled joy of life,
Love's lightning happiness, my soul hath known,
And, worn with feverish strife,
Would fold its wings : take back, take back thine own.

Hark ! how the wind swept by ;
The tempest's voice comes rolling o'er the wave :
Hope of the sailor's eye
And maiden's heart, blest Mother ! guide and save.

THE HAPPY GATE OF HEAVEN

(FATHER FABER)

FAIR are the portals of the day,
The gateways of the morning,
Whose pillared clouds the rising sun
Is rosily adorning ;
Fair are the portals of the day,
The gateways of the even,
When through long halls of burning light
Earth gazes into Heaven.

REFRAIN.

Of matchless light, of grace untold,
All love be thine, fair House of Gold !
All praise to thee be given,
Sweet balm of all our sadness,
Dear cause of all our gladness,
Thou happy Gate of Heaven !

THE HAPPY GATE OF HEAVEN

Fair are the passes in the hills,
The gateways of the mountains,
Along whose sounding channels leap
The many-gifted fountains ;
Fair are the thresholds of blue sea,
The gateways of the ocean,
That guard the harbours of the earth,
Swinging with placid motion.

But fairest of all gateways far,
Art thou, the sinless Mary !
The gate that opens, yet secures
God's inmost sanctuary :
Gate of the one true Dawn art thou,
Gate of the one sweet Even,
Gate of the Angels into earth,
The gate of souls to Heaven.

Thou art the gate God entered by
To visit His creation,
The mountain-pass where leap and flow
The wells of our salvation ;
Thou art the gate of azure sea
With the lighthouse ever burning,
The exile's happy landing-place,
To his Father's house returning.

THE HAPPY GATE OF HEAVEN

Bright Gateway ! through whose golden arch
The Father's grace is flowing,
Whose steps the Son and Spirit wear
With their incessant going ;
Porch of the Throne ! what beauteous hosts
Of Angels cluster round thee :
Oh, happy are the sleeping souls
Whose faith and love have found thee !

*A DEAD ASTRONOMER**

(FRANCIS THOMPSON)

STARRY amorist, starward gone,
Thou art what thou didst gaze upon !
Passed through thy golden garden's bars,
Thou seest the Gardener of the stars.
She about whose moonèd brows
Seven stars make seven glows,
Seven lights for seven woes ;
She, like thine own Galaxy,
All lustres in one purity :—
What said'st thou, Astronomer,
When thou didst discover *Her* ?
When thy hand its tube let fall
Thou found'st the fairest star of all !

From 'New Poems' (Constable).

* Father Perry, S.J.

LINES FOR A DRAWING OF 'OUR LADY OF THE NIGHT'

(FRANCIS THOMPSON)

THIS, could I paint my inward sight,
This were Our Lady of the Night :
She bears on her front's lucency
The starlight of her purity :
For as the white rays of that star
The union of all colours are,
She sums all virtues that may be
In her sweet light of purity.
The mantle which she holds on high
Is the great mantle of the sky.
Think, O sick toiler, when the night
Comes on thee, sad and infinite,
Think, sometimes, 'tis our own Lady
Spreads her blue mantle over thee,
And folds the earth, a wearied thing,
Beneath its gentle shadowing ;
Then rest a little ; and in sleep
Forget to weep, forget to weep !

From 'The Ushaw Magazine.'

THE NIGHTINGALE

(GERALD GRIFFIN)

As the mute nightingale in closest groves
Lies hid at noon, but, when day's piercing eye
Is locked in night, with full heart beating high
Poureth her plain-song o'er the light she loves ;
So, Virgin ever pure and ever blest !—
Moon of religion, from whose radiant face
Reflected streams the light of heavenly grace
On broken hearts by contrite thoughts oppressed—
So, Mary ! they who justly feel the weight
Of Heaven's offended majesty, implore
Thy reconciling aid, with suppliant knee ;
Of sinful man, O sinless Advocate !
To thee they turn, nor Him the less adore :
'Tis still His light they love, less dreadful seen in thee.

ALMA MATER

(FATHER JOHN FITZPATRICK, O.M.I.)

SWEET Mother-Maid ! about thy knee
A bevy of sweet maids I see :
Thou shelterest 'neath thy virgin stole,
And near the whiteness of thy soul,
The mothers of the time to be.

An Alma Mater unto me
Thou seem'st to all who lovingly
Would live within thy love's control,
Sweet Mother-Maid !

By God endowed and reared, in thee
Is virtue's university ;
And while the Christian ages roll,
Through thee He grants, from pole to pole,
To ' sweet girl-graduates ' their degree,
Sweet Mother-Maid !

From ' Virgo Praedicanda ' (Washbourne).

SANCTA MARIA

(AUBREY DE VERE)

MARY! to thee the humble cry.
What seek they? Gifts to pride unknown.
They seek thy help—to pass thee by:—
They murmur, ‘Show us but thy Son.’

The childlike heart shall enter in :
The virgin soul its God shall see :
Mother, and maiden pure from sin,
Be thou the guide : the Way is He.

The mystery high of God made Man
Through thee to man is easier made :
Pronounce the consonant who can
Without the softer vowel’s aid ?

From ‘May Carols’ (Burns and Oates).

SIR LANCELOT'S HYMN

(FATHER FABER)

SEE, see how evening's sloping shadows grow
 Upon the massy nave, and all the stone
 Is flecked with little clouds of colour, thrown
From the west window ; on the ground they go,
Silently creeping eastward, while the air
 Thickens within the choir, and so conceals
The altar, whose benignant presence there
 The slowly rocking lamp alone reveals.
Ah me, how still ! Our Lady's vesper song
Hath died away amid the choral throng ;
But the pure-visaged moon, that climbs elate
 The throne of day, now strikes with trembling light
 The painted lattice, where the livelong night
Saint Mary chants her lone Magnificat.

Hail, Mary, hail ! O Maiden-Mother, hail !
 In thankfulness I lean upon the thought
 Of thy mysterious chastities ; unsought
Comes the sweet faith thy prayers can never fail
In that high Heaven where thou hast been assumed ;
And with this hope my spirit newly plumed

SIR LANCELOT'S HYMN

Strives upward, like a weary dove in sight
Of her lost refuge, steering by the light
Wherewith thy name hath silently illumed
The Church below, cheering the gradual night
The world hath forced upon the primal day
Of our sweet faith ; and I, on penance cast
Till patient yearning should retrieve the past,
May bless thee for the succour of thy ray.—
The light is vocal, wavering on the glass ;
The jewel midway in the braided hair,
The eyes, the lifted hand, are speaking there,
And o'er the lips the argent quiverings pass.
She sings ! she sings ! but thirsty silence drinks
The heavenly sound before its burden sinks
Into my listening ear. Hail, Mary, hail !
Hail ! thou that art the haven of the heart
Accessible in all our moods, a veil
Obscuring not, but gifted to impart
New aspects of the Cross : though sin erase
That sign from Heaven, before our downcast eyes,
Which fall on thee, its sweet reflection lies
Like a soft shadow in a moonlit place.
Hail, Mary, hail ! O wondrous Mother ! pray
To thy dear Son who takes our sins away.

*PARAPHRASE
OF AN ANCIENT BELL-
INSCRIPTION*

(FATHER BRIDGETT, C.SS.R.)

THE rose when shaken fragrance sheds around,
The bell when struck pours forth melodious sound ;
The heart of Mary, moved by earnest prayer,
Will scatter grace and sweetness everywhere.

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